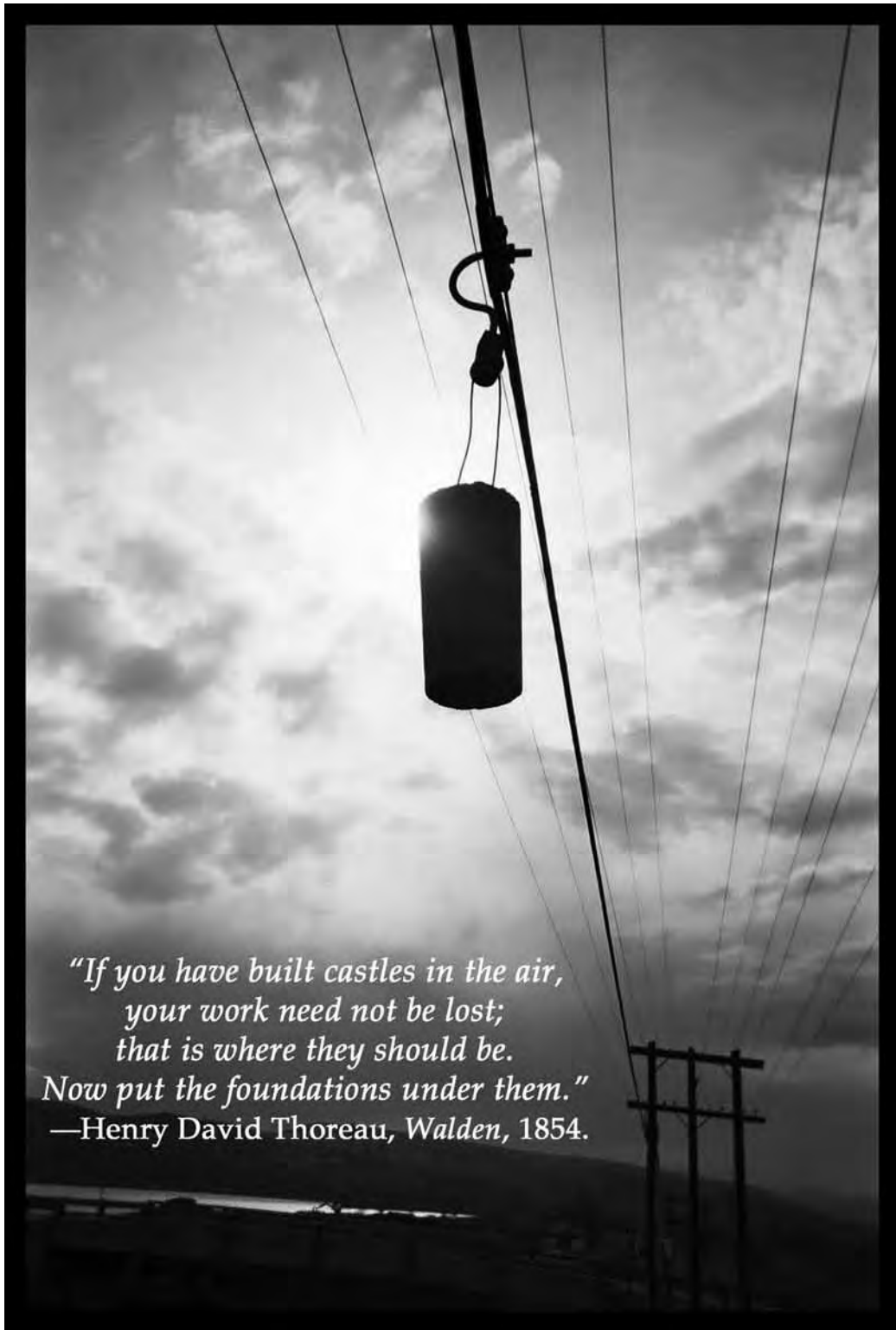


The Cenacle



15th Anniversary Issue
Number 72 □ April 2010



*"If you have built castles in the air,
your work need not be lost;
that is where they should be.
Now put the foundations under them."*
—Henry David Thoreau, *Walden*, 1854.

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April 11, 2010
8:25 p.m.
Taco Bell-
21st & Burnside [my table]

Welcome to the 15th anniversary issue of The Cenacle, also the 15th anniversary of Scriptor Press. When it was founded, Scriptor Press & The Cenacle were one & the same. Until 1999, the plan was simple: create issues of The Cenacle with material from friends, & then distribute the issues at the Jellicle Literary Guild meetings we had been holding eight times a year at Roma Restaurant in New Britain, Connecticut. A closed loop, but a working one.

Those early issues were made with typewriter, scissors, glue, photocopies. Very zine-like. Yet this similarity was deceptive; my academic background in literature led me more to admire the small press publications of the 19th century (like Ralph Waldo Emerson's Dial) & 1920s (like Blast magazine). My interest was not in a rough cut, underground look but in publishing good writing & art. A difference in emphasis & influence. On the other hand, the

zine world is appealing for its widespread interest in community over commerce. Trading zines is common, or gifting, as is Scriptor Press's approach. In contrast, small press journals are distributed & sold by the common practices of the contemporary marketplace. So as The Cenacle developed over the years, it developed more & more the look of a fine small press journal while retaining the heart of a zine.

My time 1997-1999 at Emerson College in Boston wrought great expansion in The Cenacle & Scriptor Press. In 1998 I started the online website Electro Lounge, a site that in the dozen years since has grown from a single page or two of links to a full-blown online repository of Scriptor Press projects. The challenge with a not-for-profit independent press is often one of budget. Distributing productions online can be very cheap & reach across the globe. Statistics kept regularly show that this press's works have been downloaded by persons on every major continent. This is amazing to consider versus its origins not long ago among a

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dozen friends or so.

But—again a but—wide electronic distribution is not sufficient. I like producing printed works. Holding a book or journal in hand, paging through, giving it in person or by post to someone is an experience I have always treasured. So The Cenacle & Scriptor Press's other works are still printed up as budget allows, & distributed on a more modest but persistent scale. In lieu of payment, contributors to the journal get a print copy.

In 1999, three new projects came into being: Scriptor Press Sampler, an annual "best of" volume, meant to be printed in paper batches than The Cenacle & distributed freely at coffee houses, bookstores & other places; RadiBooks, a series of chapbooks, poetry & prose, each volume devoted to one Cenacle contributor; & my radio show, "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution" (currently broadcast online at <http://spfradio.yahe.net> on SpiritFlam's Radio). These additional projects moved Scriptor Press beyond the realm of just reading matter, & also presented the

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challenge of defining the scope of multiple projects & allotting time to each. This is still a challenge but I find worth in each of these projects & believe that each prospers more because of the others. No audience is monolithic in its needs or ways of finding desired works to engage. My interest has long been in how a poem or a piece of music or art could be distributed in multiple ways in many contexts. I also believe one can never have too many skills or work in too many arenas.

A fourth project begun in 1999 was the Burning Man Books project, intended for, & brought for 11 years to, the Burning Man Arts Festival in Black Rock City, Nevada. Set up as No Borders Free Bookstore, this was the first large-scale public appearance of Scriptor Press's works. BMBs is a series of reprints in chapbook form of classic works of literature. The other Scriptor Press publications came as well. The project is currently on hiatus while I re-consider its nature & mull an altered future model.

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Since 1999, all of the mentioned Scripta Press projects have been developed, changed, re-tooled, put on ice & then retrieved. I've been pushing them forward each other in more obvious & subtle ways both. My old collaborator Barbara Brannon & current one (since 2005 wife) Kassi have helped Scripta Press develop even more a collaborative model, of the kind I have always wanted.

These remarks on 15 years of press work would not be complete without some future speculation. Our pending move (I am returning after 8 years out West) to Boston this summer bursts in my mind with wonder. Since 2000, Scripta Press has moved far & wide in many directions, even as I eventually tired of the West & yearned to return to Boston. My roots are in New England, especially its literary traditions. The names Emily Dickinson, Emerson, Henry David Thoreau, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Herman Melville, & others etch deeply in my mind & heart. I return to their home, still, as much to my own home, past & to come.

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So part of me looks toward renewal of those cherished ties, even as another part of me looks ahead, to setting back in the area, to adding new roots to old. In truth, much is unforeseeable beyond extending memories into the future & making guesses at what is to come.

My commitment remains to make Scriptor Press a high quality independent press with continuing support for good new & obscure promising artists. I will continue to publish my own work through this press. Further, at this point is one that I am still working through in my mind, I do not wish Scriptor Press to exist apart from other projects but to cultivate with them the same kind of collaborative spirit that it possesses within its own processes.

A big set of vows. I suppose I feel, in short, that the mountain one seeks to climb should be both almost too much for the challenge, & bursting with unimaginable treasures to be discovered by the effort.

 4-11-2010

The Cenacle

15th Anniversary Issue
Number 72 ■ April 2010

Edited by Raymond Souland, Jr. 

Assistant Editor: Cassandra Souland

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PORTLAND, OREGON



SCRIPTOR PRESS

2010

Front cover art by Catfish Rivers. Back cover art by Raymond Soulard, Jr. & Cassandra Soulard. Original *Cenacle* logo by Barbara Brannon. Interior art by Raymond Soulard, Jr. & Cassandra Soulard, except where indicated.

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Accompanying disk to print version contains:

- *Cenacles* #47-72
- Burning Man Books #1-66
- *Scriptor Press Sampler* #1-10
- *RaiBooks* #1-6
- RS Mixes from "Within's Within: Scenes from the Psychedelic Revolution"; &
- Jellicle Literary Guild Highlights: 12/19/2009 meeting

Disk contents downloadable at: http://www.scriptorpress.com/cenacle/supplementary_disk.zip

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Thank you to those loved ones in Boston who will welcome us back this summer . . . to Anthony Miller for being a job recruiter whose great professionalism is matched by his kindness & decency . . . to KT at S Corp. for being a friend when I found few there to like or trust . . . & no less to Pittman Family Dentistry for just being decent folks, the kind one hopes to find anywhere . . .



AbandonView

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Notes from the Northwest

The following continues the series originally called Notes from New England, begun in issue 24-25 (Winter 1998), and resumed after a long absence in issue 59 (October 2006). It is intended as a gathering-place for observations of various lengths upon the world around me. It will be culled, like much of my writing, from my notebooks, and perhaps these thoughts will be expanded upon sometimes as well.

“Nothing lasts . . . but nothing is lost . . .”
—William Blake / Terence McKenna / Shpongole

Prelude

Walking helps me to clear my mind of useless noise & cohere, look around, collect some new thoughts from what I see around me, & recall ideas that have been hanging around of late.

NW 21st Avenue in Portland, Oregon is lined with bars for blocks on end, college-age bars with karaoke jukeboxes & drink specials. The pretty girls & boys stream in & out, gossiping about sex while spying each other's outfits, tits, asses etc. I come to the CoffeeTime Coffeehouse on 21st which is cavernous & more freakish than the bars. The pretty & the pauvres here alike.

So, tonight, I was walking along 21st & thinking how the bastards & angels of human consciousness are openly displayed everywhere. How most young adults herd into boozy joints to stare at each other while getting drunker & drunker, a state best described as peaking early & then lumbering along for hours on end until the body collapses exhausted.

But none of these people invented any of this. A child arrives unknowing into this consumptive culture & is brainwashed into needing things to call his own, to please others, to find meaning. One might rebel as a child, & a few will later, but there simply is no reward for it. Humans are tribal animals—whether it's football teams, religions, or nation-states—and the satisfaction in grokking with one's fellows—even superficially—weighs hard on most. We wish to be liked, accepted, from our genes out.

And if we heeded our genes—build, breed, age, & die—life would be simpler. But I think it's not that easy—why do even a few rebel, even for awhile? Consciousness. The moving ocean of self-awareness in each of us that tends toward others & away, in ways powerful & not fully controllable. So even as the young drinkers stream agreeably in & out of the bars, led by instinct to seek mates—fecundity in females, power in males—something else is going on. A restlessness, a rebellion, the inner ocean's tides. Consciousness is instinct's uneasy partner, at best, well nigh to its enemy at times.

When I walk down 21st Avenue on a Saturday night, I feel & sense all of these contradictions. The push & pull on all sides, the possibilities, the chains. The endless skies above, the traffic light at every intersection. The ungovernable dreams in the seeming merest of us.

After living for most of the past eight years on the West Coast, Pacific Northwest, Seattle & Portland, I've decided to return to Boston with KD. I've been to Boston once since 2002, in 2007 for a visit. Even then I missed it. I've never felt my roots take out here; rather, I would say "I'm from Boston," which is truer than the West Coast, or Connecticut, where I was born & lived til age 28. I lived in Boston for ten years, after gravitating toward there for at least ten years before that.

It makes me wonder: how does one grasp one place, not another, as home? And how even this changes over years. I don't miss Connecticut, or Seattle, save for sentiment, the sugar taste of some memories. Yet I lived in the first for 28 years, & deliberately moved to & settled awhile in the latter.

But I want to continue something in Boston, re-unite, resume. A curiosity for all I've missed & what's next to come. I left in such a hurry, for love, for new places, to romance the restlessness, swim deeper in my inner ocean of mystery.

It was love, initially, & that failed long ago, at least how I intended. But more than that it was Art. It was Burning Man, as I knew it for many years. What drew me West was a need to live near the Burning Man Arts Festival, when it was known as that.

And for years, my life's calendar set Labor Day week as its yearly climax. Through jobs, through moves, through getting married, year after year, preparing No Borders Free Bookstore for its annual appearance in Black Rock City, Nevada, Burning Man's desert home, focused everything else.

I think I was trying to arrive, not at a place ultimately, but at a time. I wanted to arrive in 1968, where I felt everything that mattered to me sourced. The hippy girl I chased out here, the freak arts festival I obsessed to attend every year, the Art & countercultural principles I devoted to, I felt it could be found in some form out West, that 1968 had not ended, that there was, weirdly put, still time.

I learned that nothing goes away, nothing returns, & everything changes. I learned that it's not Burning Man nor any other event or project that I serve. I serve Art.

And I think, strangely, 1968 came around again in 2008, & this time we won. We elected the RFK & King of this young new century in one man: Barack Obama. Like King & Kennedy, he urges us to work harder, believe higher in our potentials. We have psychedelics, still, & their weird progeny in the Internet.

I found that there is both a psychedelic revolution & a technological evolution, & I cherish both, & I serve neither. I serve Art. Art is pushing me to seek my own higher ground, my native soil, where I can operate from a sense of home, much as I can. Boston feels to me like where Art is calling me, & where I must bring my own. I miss it.

Regarding Leaving Black Rock City

It's despair. A lost being. Not Art. I still obsess over Art. But Burning Man meant *so fucking much to me*—It helped me save my life—I feel like I owe it a word of goodbye—

After 11 years of attendance, I will not be coming to Burning Man this year. By my choice, not a financial decision. It's more that the feeling of excitement & novelty I once felt is over. What remains is obligation. And that's not enough. Not enough to make the effort worth it this time.

I brought my No Borders Free Bookstore project every year with excitement, with anticipation. Last year I finally found: too many rules. Too many cops. Too many drunks. Too many people.

It's long past "no spectators" when 50,000 people show up but there is *no* substantial increase in the amount of Art. It's *mostly* spectators now.

They spectate & then they call back home. Email. Blog. Where once it was a hard week disconnected from the world, & confronted with the fact of those in the city as all one had to make due with, now a cell call can help a down moment.

The Art is no less, but it's no more. Someone builds a spaceship. Oh. The Man. The Temple. Oh.

Which is to say, yes & no. I believe evolution has become simply perpetuation. An institution. The Grateful Dead in the 1990s. Fame for what was. *For ever-diminishing connections to then.*

Which is not to say it won't go on, nor that it shouldn't. Someone, many thousands, are going to their virgin Burn this year. 2010. Wow.

But I feel like a holdout. Like not going loosens those old bonds of identity a bit more. One less person to remember what 1999 was like.

It's a combination of despair & I don't give a fuck anymore. I wish I did. I wish I still felt it. It feels worse than so much else. It's a death to me. I am mourning not going.

But I am not going. And for awhile a part of me will be identified to myself as "I'm not going to Burning Man." Look at me, walking down the streets, steps that will not lead there, that will arrive me elsewhere around the week leading up to Labor Day.

I will not be there. And I will be sad. But the braver, harder thing is not to go. To admit the break, nod, move along. Nobody did this to me, not one person or incident. The bond was durable for a decade until it wasn't.

I won't be looking for an alternative anytime soon. Some kinds of relationships do not get replaced. For awhile it's leaving, desperate, absence. Despair mixed with indifference. Sentiment strides alongside boredom.

I just don't give a fuck anymore. And it breaks my fucking heart.

[From January 19, 2010 letter to Jim Burke III]

Like Art, the psychedelic dream is a place of imagination, not earth. I suppose I had to learn this over time. Maybe part of seeking heart's desire is learning what that desire is. As one travels through time & space, people & events & locales come & go. "Things Change," you once told me (I wrote a 600-page fixtion with that title, grappling with that statement).

I left Boston because I was burnt out, jobless, alone, & the West had become my fascination. Burning Man 1999-2000-2001 helped convince me I needed to simply move out West. Then I met a girl online who lived in Portland, here, & this deepened my desire to go. When I had to go back East in 2002-2003, jobless, poor, living with Gerry (thankful to him—I had nowhere else to go), I only wanted more to get back. Burning Man 2002-2003 strengthened this in me.

What happened eventually is that I got to know the Pacific Northwest, cared for but did not love it. And Burning Man got bigger & bigger, more cops, more rules, more spectators. Deeper roots began speaking to me.

Maybe I just feel I'm done here. Like a book, it's ending. Lived in Seattle three years, miss a place or two, some nice memories, but done. Same with Portland. Of course I thought I was done with Boston. Didn't know I wasn't. All one has is the current moment's set of best guesses.

My Art's center has shifted again & therefore I follow. Goodbyes are hard, even sensible ones. And I guess I understand that my dearest goodbye is to Burning Man. For now, at least. Best guesses being what they are.

Revolution or Evolution—maybe a false choice—why not, & really probably both—some sparks come seemingly from nowhere—some build up—some stumble clumsy into being—there are steps forward, backward, sideways, & otherwise—sometime a great leap is followed by a partial jerk back—life, much less thought, does not operate in less than three dimensions & likely more—those few who seek to control many try to simplify the complex, the ambiguous—divide the many varied into few by eliminating as many exceptions as possible—reduce to black & white, two dimensions—& present this as choice—like what few are not sanctioned & emphasized are not important, well nigh do not exist—

The exceptions *do* exist—the exceptions *are* the rule. We each & all simultaneously have much & little & virtually *nothing* in common—

I saw no revolution in Burning Man, & its evolution was toward an overgrown hidebound caricature of its radical roots whose only solid validities remaining were its gift economy & its unforgiving location. Too many compromises with cops. Too many rules because too many drunks who brought little but more drunks. Too little valid outreach to its community—especially those not in San Francisco. Too little risk because too much fear of being shut down. My preparation each year was similar, my expense increasing, yet the magic of attending diminished slowly for me. Til one day in winter 2009, December or so, I realized I genuinely dreaded the whole process of going again. And with an indifference still somehow deeply wrenching, I decided in January 2010 I wasn't going. Not in 2010, maybe not ever

again. Maybe not not ever again.

I wonder: if Nevada legalizes personal possession of marijuana, would that change my mind? It would certainly back off a lot of cops. The vibe of the plaza would no longer be so purely boozy.

But would that be enough? How did the vibe *get* so boozy? Were the compromises with cops, the pile up of rules in the face of careless drunken hoards—were they enough to keep the festival valid?

I remember a few years ago, the word “Art” was removed from the event’s official name. I cringed. Cops didn’t cause this change. I accepted it uneasily, as the increasing numbers of rules.

I don’t have a conclusion. Maybe it would have been better for Burning Man to have folded than to compromise again & again & again. Or, maybe, it would have been better to trust the community built up, not rule like an unelected politburo over the event. Do more than a yearly census at Black Rock City. Take votes on major issues: the next year’s theme, budget priorities, art funding, responses to authorities’ encroachment on civil liberties. Reach out for community opinion & respond to what is being said.

I think about the crucial principles of the event, & question its fidelity to them:

1. *No Spectators*—or even few? Or not fucking thousands? This would involved capping attendance, funding more small art projects, encouraging everyone to get involved, through a high profile campaign. Many don’t know how *not* to be spectators. This can be taught, encouraged, fostered. End result: more Art, some of it amateurish, but *fewer spectators*. Not everyone has artistic gift but everyone has some creative impulse that waits to be tapped.
2. *Leave No Trace*—It’s a sound, good, & necessary principle but not every newbie shows up with the know-how or the experienced camp-mates. Many newbies show up with no fucking clue what they’re in for, & the subtle trick expected of them is this: leave Black Rock City in a week covered in dust, in psychic traces, but *without* having harmed the space where all this happened. It’s not an easy lesson to learn, especially if nobody has explained it, even really tried.

First time attending Burning Man is big, like the first time tripping or having sex. One has ideas, prejudices, stupid notions. If lucky, one has good companions to learn with or from, or both. But many don’t. Told Burning Man is a raging freak party in the desert with crazy art & naked chicks, the path from there to “leave no trace” is unlikely to be climbed. It’s too easy, especially at night, to do what most of us do in cities (some more often, some less): toss it away in the dark, behind a car, in a toilet, deep in the desert.

The point here is that each participant helps to create Black Rock City but many do not realize this. Many feel what the event does to them, not that there is partnership & collaboration every step of the way, that every person’s experiences is creating the city. Not just the fire dancers or the artists who put up the great structures of Art.

3. *Radical Self Expression*—but within the bounds of a long, long list of rules. Worsening this is that many have rarely expressed anything radically in their lives. It takes learning, emulation, encouragement.

But, more, what radical self-expression is there? Year by year, the city changes little. Its layout, the Man, the Temple, Center Camp. When was the last time there was a radical shift in Black Rock City? It is bound not just by cops & budget constraints, but by a lack of imagination. A hungry will to survive. But why? I ask this with no answer. It might take on a wilder reality if it no longer existed. Or maybe its shift to something unimaginable awaits.

Regarding Returning to Boston

[From January 25, 2010 letter to Joe Ciccone]

In the past 7½ years I've been back to Boston once, for a few days in 2007. At that point I was living in Seattle & planning to move to Portland, & thus as far from thinking about returning back there as I could be. I went back to visit from sentiment & curiosity. I was also wanting to visit friends & family there, & in Connecticut. I didn't miss living there very much at that point.

I built up a great enthusiasm over many years for living out West, & played it out in actually moving here, & this enthusiasm held me aloft for quite a few years before it began degrading.

I think the core of it was that neither the West nor Burning Man inspire my Art anymore. And Boston, strangely, lures me as it did long ago, in the '80s & early '90s when I lived in Connecticut & took Greyhound buses up there.

I look East & I see possibilities I did not see these years ago when I left. I credit the possibilities for connection the Internet has created but I also recognize that when you're looking somewhere else, somewhere fairly unknown, it's harder to be where you are.

Burning Man drew me out here, as did how it seemed psychedelia existed out here in the culture more profoundly. There was truth & delusion both in what I saw looking from Boston 3000 miles to the West Coast. I'm glad I came, glad I lived here with KD, & glad we are leaving by our own volition.

I think the phrase that comes to me when thinking of Boston is "finally following through." I felt that I never did all I could there, never found the way to integrate my work & art projects fully with that area, realize this potential. I'm not saying I know precisely how now, but I think my experiences at Burning Man & my knowledge of technology are a powerful combination. These, plus the element I am missing here: a close, nearby clique of artist-friends.

Built on that is my experience as a writer, editor, & publisher. I bring back to Boston a lot more than I left with in these arenas. I've built up my own work & also greatly expanded Scriptor Press's scope. Projects I began long ago have bloomed, & I'm eager to see what is possible when again settled in home & pay job, in familiar environs & with some beloved artist-friends within range.

Writing was what kept me going through the worst of my years, & as times got better

I was able to push out again, expand my ground beyond what I needed, connect to others. Using the new technologies, I have developed a small but powerful presence in multiple medias (journal, books, website, radio) both online & in fleshspace.

So a lot churns in my mind & heart right now, even as the steps from here to there are many, rife with the uncertainties of any such big effort. Further, I am trying to value every day living here as best I can. I'm not *escaping*; *I'm moving on*.

Regarding Climate Change

I don't know if I would use the term "global warming," so much as climate change. And I don't see how this is such a controversial idea since humans change the climate all the time, when we farm land, clear woods for housing, enact wars that destroy whole areas. We send pollution into the air every single day. We breed new kinds of plants & animals. We continue to grow in population in ridiculous numbers.

And I don't need a scientist to see how humans are currently affecting the planet, & have been for a long time. I arrive at the office I work at in downtown Portland by walking down paved streets strewn with trash, passed by hundreds of cars spewing poisons into the air. Not too far from almost anyone is a factory of some kind with a cloud of black smoke coming from it. Where North America was once mostly forest it is now not. One can see these things with one's own eyes, smell them. I do what I can, in terms of recycling, & product purchase, & using public transit. But that is a small drop in the bucket.

I respect those scientists who have & are working to help us better understand how humans are affecting the planet. I find much of what is being said to be convincing, & scary. That said, I believe there is more yet to learn & integrate with what we know now. Science is the process of theory & proof, & then more evidence, & another theory & another proof, etc. That's why we don't believe that the earth is the center of the universe anymore, or that there are only five planets in the solar system.

As far as legislation, I'm all for the kinds that cuts the poisons we put in the air, or in the earth, or in our own bodies. But we can't even decide that ill or injured human beings should be cared for by doctors without ending up financially destitute & possibly homeless. We do a shit poor job at caring for our own kind, & this is reflected by how we abuse & neglect nature & the planet as a whole.

The thing I keep coming back to is that we could live in balance with each other & with the rest of the world. It is possible. Humans are capable of great innovations for all kinds of works. We can build death camps, with efficient gas chambers; we can build electric cars that get 100 miles on a single charge. We can tend a stranger in a crisis, or step over his moaning body.

I believe this planet is alive, & that is the only reason we are alive on it. Inorganic planets without water & air & so on do not support life, much less the teeming millions of kinds of life this earth supports. I believe we affect the planet & that we often affect it poorly, with short-term decisions & indifference.

Given the mystery of the future, or what calamity may or may not happen, why chance it? Why not put all of our resources into rejuvenating our race & our world? Because it's not

important enough? Because it's too much work? Because God will take care of us? I don't know the answer, but I suspect that until something happens, a person's rise to great power, a catastrophe, something, things will shamle along as they are, with people arguing this way & that.

We certainly can be better caretakers of our Mother Earth, the being from whom we all come, & everything we know comes, & that we return to when our lives are over. This planet is home, every inch of it. It is unimaginably beautiful, & bountiful, & that we do not cherish & keep her, like we do our families & loved ones & possessions & human institutions, is a tragedy. Whether we are able to inhabit her for the next 50 or 50,000 years is less relevant to me than how we treat her each & every day. We are of this place, but we do not own it, much as many of us act the part &, worse, the part of indifferent, abusive owners at that. We do not own this place even as each of us will live his or her whole life here & pass on here. What set of human beliefs about the sacred would argue against our home not being so?

I've long wondered if the planet will outlive humanity, as it was here before our kind. My suspicion is that we will eventually overwhelm its resources by sheer numbers & abuse, & either die off, or launch in the stars, to use & abuse some other place. The hope I retain, because I need to have some hope to function, is that the balance of people who don't want things to be worse & worse will shift in greater numbers til action is taken, real action, beyond simply lowering one or another grave statistic, toward an honest reckoning with the fragility, mortality, & unspeakable beauty that this world still bears, despite all, & what good can yet come.

Regarding Wilhelm Reich

Of late I spent many weeks studying the writer & thinker Wilhelm Reich. I was drawn to his arguments about the importance of capacity to orgasm, deep orgasm, as an indicator of health or trouble in a person. In Europe in the '20s & '30s, he worked with Freud until the two broke. Freud didn't see solutions to the problems of human civilization. Reich kept looking. Past Freud to Marxist politics, then past Marx to something he called *orgone*, something like the energy life force itself. Put in short, he seemed too German & too Communist (however much he was neither), too arrogant (which he was), to survive in the McCarthy-lorded 1950s, & he died a broken man in jail.

What he was chasing wasn't new, his form, not his idea. For we struggle with this world, how to navigate it, what to do, what to believe.

Reich's orgone energy, his accumulator boxes in which one sat to heal; his cloud busters designed to induce or drive away rain; his belief that teaching youth about sex would help prevent so much neuroses later; these ideas & conceptions drive to one point: nobody has ever explained fully what this world is or why we are here or what we do now.

Choices lead to other choices, one hour to the next. Habits formed in chance may settle in, unaccountably. Deep held beliefs are one day gone, not even dust. The world changes, or at least shifts & shifts & shifts, like the tides in each of us, each his deep ocean, its endless mystery, fear & curiosity toward it.

Conclusion

What I keep coming back to here is roots, home. I guess I cannot deny my old idea that home is a verb, not a noun, that it can be found in passing in a place, a group of people, even a set of beliefs. Or, I suppose one could draw back from human action & say that world is home, even to including burial or dispersal at death. Maybe I feel closer to the earth in New England? I've thought about the snowless cities of the Pacific Northwest. Knowing that New England gets winters long past loveable by March, I nonetheless miss them.

Maybe one simply calls some things native to one's heart & others foreign. No matter how great the grasp, some things remain *out there*, unloved nakedly, to the last.

So that seems what I'm working toward, home as I wish to feel it closer. What I've felt more & now less toward the West. It drew me, & now I part. Taking, I suppose, an affection swathed in memories, & the discovery that what I left behind in Boston I can honestly say I want again. I won't grow old wondering what if, resenting that I never had the courage to leave. Now the courage resides in returning, & figuring out how to live there hereon.







Ric Amante**Above the Tree Line**

Right now I'm lying shirtless
on a hot slab of pink granite
in a sun-blasted, speechless trance—
part lizard, part corpse.
I can't say why it's so
or where it comes from,
yet I know the well-being of others
keeps this mountain in business;
if blessings are missing,
this incarnation means nothing.

At John's Hardware

John's been married to Kate for sixty years;
today she lies in the hospital dallying with mortality.
It scares and shatters him,
and his eyes turn inward,
grow spectral and glossy
as he confides in me by a pegboard of keys.
"It's coming out black like old motor oil.
They have her hooked up to a bag of something
that looks like wallpaper paste.
I've seen a lot and given death
some thought . . . Ah, Christ,
I don't know.
I guess it's her time now, my time soon.
They say it all makes sense,
but why isn't it as simple and clean
as the task right here before us—
blank lined up to original
lever guided down
steel cut
burrs filed
a sure thing
a new key."

Holy Ghost

The self drops away
as the eyes become camera
focused by a hand without time or agenda.
When will this happen,
how long will it take,
where do fortune and faith figure in?
And where were you staying
when the earth was glacial?
How will you speak
when it's vapor or fire?
Yet now this go-round
of flesh close and precious,
a sojourn in the guest-house
of an inscrutable host.
You're lying in bed
in the arms of a lover,
you're lying in bed
in the grip of a cancer,
you're lying in bed but also
sitting in a chair by an open window,
regarding the play of her hair on the pillow,
observing a dagger unfold in your side.



MP: RA

Sitting in with the Mystics

There's nothing we don't find merciful.
We worship the black iron of sewer grates,
the cold husks of fallen sparrows,
the negative space of empty lots.
Perhaps we just ain't right
and our transmissions much too singular,
but we're always the last to jump ship.
When the curved white spike of the crescent moon
is all that hangs between faith and meaninglessness,
we sit up straight in ramshackle wooden chairs
and take inventory with our weary left hand.
We just ain't right,
yet have no agenda but to kick and burn.
Come dawn the purveyors of light
pull their golden cart into the alley.
We open the trapdoor
and are crushed by the brilliance.
A jubilation, a coronation,
a concatenation of impeccability.
We just ain't right,
and our outstretched arms are morning glories
rising and falling on sun-bleached pickets.

Unrequited

I—Prehistory

Shoulder to shoulder on the deck of the ferry,
 this photo on the desk before me.
 There's sunlight on our faces, pleasure in our eyes,
 the swell of the ocean behind us—
 as my arms then, thoughts now,
 ache to pull you closer.

II—In Media Res

You sit in your sun porch, warm but not hot,
 green tea, brown eyes and all.
 No one can touch you—you can look far afield.
 And you see too clearly
 it's best we not go deeper.
 So you say and I guess and I guess.

III—Last Time

Full moon roosts red and unreal
 from where water joins sky
 from where we tilt on motel chairs
 in a cabin hard by the shore.
 Your face in profile locked and unattainable.
 But I can't let it break, won't let it break me.
 And what doesn't catch at the end of this night
 the stars swallow and carry away.

Jim Burke III



Editor's Note: The following is the twenty-ninth in an ongoing series derived from the correspondence between Jim Burke III and myself, begun in 1992, and in the spirit of the more enthused letter-writing tradition of yesteryear.

March 2, 2010
Hartford, Connecticut

After much thought, I suppose the best place to begin is at the beginning, at least to the best of my memory and what I can extrapolate from other sources. The purpose of this letter, Ray, is not only to respond to your last one to me¹, but also to incorporate the reasons I have ended up where I am in both place and time. This is not to imply anything negative about my circumstances, but gazing back on my life justifies my existence metaphysically.

My parents met in Boston at a relatively young age around the mid-1940s, just after WWII. My father graduated from Boston University and my mother from Boston College. They were married in 1952, and I was born ten months later in March of 1953. It should be noted that since my father was brought up in the Catholic faith by strict Irish and Amish parents, and my mother in the Protestant faith, doctrine of the former dictated that all the children in the family should be brought up Catholic. This would have a major influence in my life, especially with regard to forming relationships and cognitive independent reasoning about life in general. The result of this, for better or worse, was that I learned to trust my intuition more and more. At one point, when I was using psychedelics, my intuition evolved into empathy, or perhaps a combination of the two.

My earliest childhood memories are vague as are those of most people, but I can recall playing with other kids outside our apartment when I was about two, living across the street from a golf course and crossing (forbidden!) to chase golf balls, and taking a bath with my two brothers. This would have had to occur when I was four or five, since my mother had us four years and three months apart. As I stated, Catholic doctrine, no birth control, and thus three kids in four years. I found out later that my mother started using birth control pills as soon as they hit the market and the Burke line stopped at that point for about a decade! The hell with Catholic doctrine.

By this time I had lived in several towns around metro-Boston and my father accepted a job with an insurance company in New Bedford, Mass. We ended up living in Fairhaven until I was nine. I could play at the Atlas Tack Factory (got a lot of bike flat tires there, much to my father's dismay), walk to the wharf and play with crabs and starfish (as well as picking up pennies the fishermen would give me to clean the dock) and, most importantly, play under the giant trees collecting chestnuts. I never realized it at the time, but, looking back on all these activities, I can see that I was quite the loner. I don't remember doing much with either my younger brother (15 months younger than me) or my youngest brother (more than four years younger). I enjoyed being the loner but I didn't realize it at the time, although my intuition was guiding me—pure action—*tabula rasa*. I knew intuitively that I had a spiritual calling

¹ See "Notes from Northwest" in this issue.

of some kind, although I could not possibly have interpreted as such back then since I lacked intellectual reference points to define and *appreciate it*. Hence, I became through innocence. Catholic doctrine shaped me through church services every Sunday with parochial school and the catechism. This is *not* to indicate negativity about this system, but rather to make the reader aware of fact

In March of 1962 my father was transferred to Boston and our family moved to Billerica, Mass. I proceeded to get into a fight with some kid I met on the school bus an hour before. The problem was that the fight took place on the front lawn, “under the American flag.” My father was happy since I stood up for myself, my mother didn’t care, but the principal labeled me a troublemaker since I was the new kid on the block. Again, I was unaware of this at the time, but this incident would follow me through grade school. The powers-that-be placed all the “troublemakers” together and, of course, this led to more confrontations from grades 4 through 6. These were the usual schoolboy rough-ups, where fists were the only weapons used and the worst anybody got was a black eye. However, this got tiring very fast, and I would return home to what had become my favorite pastime since moving to Billerica—walking in the 200+ acres of woods, trails, and forest directly bordering on our property. It turned out to be a magical paradise. The woods became my second home. I could make tree houses and forts, above and below ground, and hike into the forest for about two miles. There was even a hill about 200 feet high that was at the top of the local natural gas pipeline. I discovered it by accident one day, and was able to view unobstructed the John Hancock Tower in Boston, about 15 miles as the crow flies (this building was the tallest in Boston, circa 1969). All the major landmarks in the woods were given names, including Split Rock (about ten feet high), Circle Trail Fork, Water Trail (there was spring water that flowed from the ground about a mile out), Gray’s Hill (used primarily during the winter for sledding) and Thorn Area—stay away! I didn’t know it then, but this was a microcosm of how Amazon jungle natives would traverse dozens of miles hunting for food and water. They could always find their way back by recognizing subtle landmarks. The woods also gave me the greatest measure for solitude that I could capture, once I got older and my childhood friends went on to other pursuits.

Solitude was precious for me then as it is now, and I suppose that is the purpose of this letter. I value time alone since I have two daughters I take care of with varied pursuits. I have also learned to develop and maintain empathy. I see and feel (sometimes physically—the shit in this world can make me vomit, or at the very least nauseous) others’ pain. This is part of the meditation tree of life. It has many limbs and the goal is to keep pursuin’ the truth. Some of the limbs are longer than others and require you to be in different places for varied periods of time. Your last letter is consistent with this and your empathy has obviously grown and been internalized. It took me about three complete reads of your letter to understand and appreciate your need, your reason to relocate. You have gone beyond intuition and are fortunate to have someone with you that cares for and will support you. Another experience is going to open up for you, this time with your “significant other.”

I went to college for three years after graduating from high school in 1971 (took a year off and started at Lowell Tech Institute the next year). I majored in accounting, math, and music in three years. I quit and hit the road in 1976 when my parents moved to West Hartford, Connecticut, so that my father could accept a lateral transfer and work with the same insurance company. I moved to Boston and my psychedelic rebirth took place in earnest. I worked my way around the Mass/NH area with guitar in hand, smokin’ & token’, smokin’



MP: JBIII

again on Boston Common, smokin' at Store 24 where I worked until 2 a.m. some nights, smokin' down at Lewis Wharf—did a lot of smokin', and it was fun. I partied in Billerica and was welcomed at any party, as long as I played and sang. I also discovered Walden Pond around this time and was drawn to it. In fact, I would visit there every chance I had after work during 1977-78. My empathy had grown and is still way beyond intuition. The vibrations were and are alive for me there. I go to Walden whenever I can—I know it is where I belong and where I can recharge, even if it is only temporary.

Perhaps when I die there will come a revelation as to why some of us follow a “sixth sense,” as it were, while others are content to follow as part of the sheeple and chew on the daily cud. The artist's life is certainly not meant for everybody. Your letter indicated you were “done” in Portland. You are the only one that can possibly determine this. Your intuition, and maybe empathy too, Ray, made the decision. I found, when I recently turned the empathy inward, that I solved a lot of my own puzzle. I know why I am and who I am. I know what I should and can do. I know, and now I think (especially after your last letter), so do you!

Where do we go from here? In a perfect world, we could pursue our artistic endeavors without political constraint, and the manifest chains that inevitably bind us to the physical plane. My escape continues to be a little weed playin', and smokin' a guitar—or something like that. I know I can never go back to working a full-time meaningful job in social services, just as you would probably find it difficult, if not impossible, to immerse yourself in the world (again) of politically correct academia. Is it too far out to wish we could live and procreate at a place like Waldens Pond? My intuition tells me that this world, including this country, will be at war for decades to come. Terrorism cannot be fought in terms of warring factions, only countered to varying degrees. I intend to leave the manifestation of the physical plane before I “die,” as much as possible anyway. Technology may have its place, but I can't find it. Violence has no place in my world, although I would argue a world without it would need to be re-examined, re-classified, and re-defined as to its place in the universe.

People will be unable to achieve enlightenment until they admit that the United States' involvement in the Iraq War was utterly, morally corrupt. It was led by a rat pack of sinister individuals who used their political offices for personal and social gain. Bush has gone into hiding, his *only* appearance coming with former President Clinton to urge on the American people to help the citizens of Haiti to recover from the earthquake. Ah, the absolute pathetic irony of it all. Cheney wants to go to war with the entire planet, usurp Obama's presidency, and declare himself dictator. The rest of them—including Rice, Rove, and his generals—history will judge far beyond incompetent. Iraq possessed no weapons of mass destruction and, when it became obvious the United Nations inspectors were going to recommend negotiations, Bush went to war anyway. As I write this letter, the voting returns of the recently held “elections” in Iraq are being counted. No matter the outcome, I hope that the leaders of our country have finally learned to stay the fuck out of other nations' crap (just venting a bit). I honestly thought that this country had learned from Vietnam—until the invasion of Iraq. History will deliver a harsh verdict for the crimes that the Bush administration committed.



Judih Haggai



punched up enthusiasm
blossoms sing up a storm
rowdy ridiculous

wooden chimes speak
new day approaches
welcome stranger

a polar bear walked onto my canvas
with frozen tundra words
we understood

a scale in dimension
the deeper you go
the higher the mind

fear of cold
crazy in heat
i've outlived my ecology

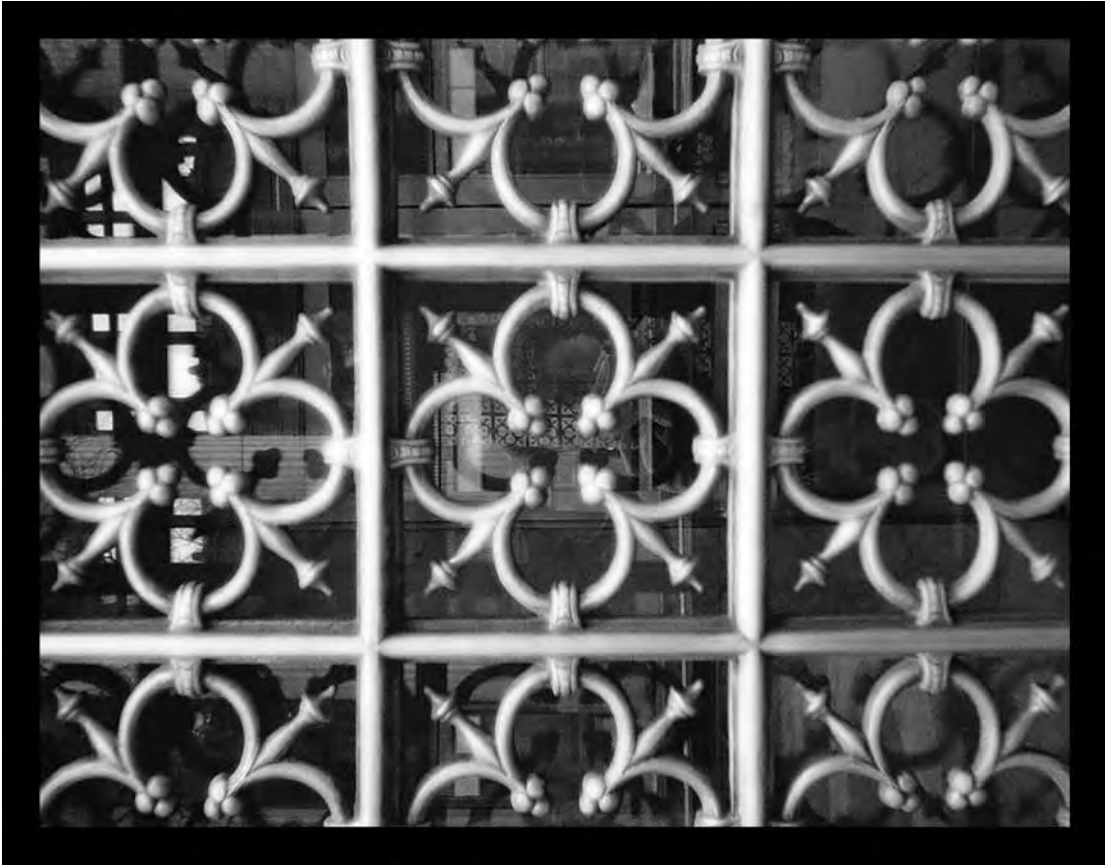
absolute zen
before enlightenment, bake cookies
after, bake cookies



oxygenated mind
trips over obstacles
no matter, nothing real
unfettered exploration
alone is spectacular
together is bliss

and why sudden crows
flying and cawing and drawing pictures of hidden landscapes?
why crows?
why not hawks and eagles?
or pigeons and doves?
why crows?
why do i wait for crows to describe the morning?

replay, replay, replay
no game
but only game
lock er up
no need for key
no one understands
both sides play
all sides deadly serious
don't look, must look
but not now, never now
lock er up
one day it'll somehow fade away
but not now, never now
lock er up



MP: KS

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Labyrinthine

[a new fixtion]

Part Three.

“Beware & Be Aware.”

It was breathless, sweet nocturnal fineness, down an avenue, hurrying, in company, not so much what toward, but hurrying, a sugared lightness, hair long brushed, dressed to my own pleasure, a tie-dye serpent t-shirt & old jeans, black buckled boots, hurrying, I don’t know where, I felt the moment dearly, I felt it passing, not real, not mine, I can’t be that girl, why, Samantha? Why can’t I be that lightly hurrying smiling girl & her companions breathless down an avenue toward—?

We sat on the smoking deck of the Seattle-to-Bremerton ferry & Gretta played an acoustic guitar & sang to me. Her voice was soft & heavy, her crooning weighted with her years, her miles. The day was clear, utterly clear, & Mount Rainier a great snowy cathedral wishing & giving no praise. She smoked all my cigarettes & made me bum some more for her. “Nice tits on that one, buddy, I’d do her fetching too, for a treat,” leering fuck with a full pack of Marlboro Lights. Her skin sprays shine & I don’t have this & I don’t know why in the world—

I was happy though it didn’t seem much to me. My apartment was one room, no fridge, some roaches. It was in a basement but had its own outside steps & door. We’d sit there looking across the street at the park. Watch the hookers, the dealers, the cops. We’d drink cheap fucking 40s for hours & watch. It was summer & everyone was working some shitty job. We resented school but still thought maybe—my friend Carlene & I would mess around sometimes but wouldn’t let it go beyond bodies tangling for warmth. Kept hearts iced. Too many dynamics among friends to change & we weren’t old enough to know how many lone bed nights waited—we still thought maybe—Carlene’s eyes were the palest blue eyes, I’ve never seen near their like—

I climbed on the eagle’s back, felt his throbbing winged body beneath me, then launch into the air, the air smacked me with rushing cold, I hung on, I couldn’t do more for awhile, we flew often & I thought they were dreams though I knew I’d climbed in & out of my bedroom window. My pajamas snagged a feather or two. I thought I was lucky for what I saw on those nights, aloft, the city streets, the obscure valleys, the unreachable streams where we’d land & rest—I didn’t think enough to wonder—

There was a night Preacher talked to me, we'd just met. I saw in his face a man's wonder, a man's questions. I simply knew his mind wandered my body quietly, as all men did. He asked me questions I hardly heard, in my excitement & shyness & eagerness. He asked me serious questions about nature & God & reality. He told me a private story. I idled on what to wear next we met.

I can hardly say tonight what tonight is, iron streetlamps & rushing torsos & coffeehouse heat. I want to, more & more, so close to this hour I strip & fuck it. Know it to its last music, the voices that twine & retreat. The music hanging along night's chasms of shadows. Never to know it all. Never even close. Yet—& yet—

lxi. / xxiv. / i.

What else not shown by lights, what leans back in shadow, just a touch on the strings, low, feel it, missed it? What effect, who? Face sunk in dreams by dawn, face turned & snorting on a packed carriage, face glittering in harbor tide, face several among thousands at the freak festival, touches & moves from afar,

leaves a print by chance,

call it history,

what recurs infinitely, the rotten stink of repetition, come on, push it a little, come on, what is it, kneeling in a blizzard—obscure shadows, what is it, burned obscurely into oaken interrogation tables, what is it,

what the effect, what its making hand, what does not plain travel evening streets,

“it's all *Remoteland*, all of this”

I nod, but don't quite agree

“it's a cage with no bars, it's all cage”

Nod again

“it's wanting, fucking wanting”

blue wash of anger over pink funky glow

“we don't know God—we never did—most of us—all of us?”

experience & meaning slosh up layers of contradiction

“having some of the power makes it worse—more power, even worse, no head is above water, none see the clear sky above”

the arcing glare, that's what you get, from there over to there—

look deeper, there's more inside, or pull back & keep pulling back & find there is no back wall, none—

beware & be aware, little else, none, “beware & be aware,” over the gate, across the sky, scorched through dreams, scarred through the heart, ‘ware & ‘ware, little else, & a shove along a moment too soon & off ye go—half hungry enough to eat it still live, half falling, a long falling, a years of falling toward—long falling toward—

Now they are separate again, their meeting fragments, a memory of a memory, they are far again, something has changed because they met, because we spoke, but not enough yet to win,

to break, waves within view of shore but reck them recede back, & away,

I listened, I dreamed, this book bore me new, & I climbed within its damp comforts.

What can a book do if not tell a story, or twine several together, what else can it do, I wonder that tonight, can a book affect when no matter its great interior world it is nonetheless secret, not wiggling ass in the world's market?

What if it pushed in, instead of out, what if the market-wiggling idea was not enough, what if it had to go elsewhere, even from its own past?

Perhaps it has some, but how more, how deeper, how a shift, a twist, two blows & farther in? Two blows, three words, & what else?

I keep asking, & sure the question itself & wherefrom an answer all of import. Sure & what a book is, or isn't, no necessary answer. I am sure of nothing, if I ever was, & so stride with greater care & greater doubt atwist in my breath & steps. Nothing sure but everything possible? If only . . . but what then? Would certainty even pretty replace doubt?

Look at the face of grimy God-mongers & know nothing by their words & smiles. Or hark the urban skeptics with their exotic smoke & odd glasses of vintage, their sneers, the ulcers screwed deep into any wonder or faith they may grapple—

the marketplace is hungry, for scandal, for blunt power, for pink things cleverly wronged—

I don't know & what is this precisely? Wherefrom the world, whereto its path? What if twin nowhere & nowhere?

Sure of nothing I stride & doubt, & stride & labor & empty pens, & doubt—

& some melody tickles my skin & I think words kin to new & hope—

if a battle, both sides war in a single narrow trench

if a spiritual tumult, no argument plays for more than points on its opponent. None sure enough to doubt with ease, relax & doubt—

lxii. / xxv. / ii.

It was a story Bowie told Christa one night, one he'd told Gretta on another night years back, & the difference between the two stories was something, maybe everything—

"I was coming off a bad case, a really bad one. Murder, betrayal, the common good defended in the worst possible way—I was on leave, a long one, nobody knew for sure if I'd be back. But I'd sacrificed things on this case, dear things, some you only get once in the first place & usually don't get back—

"I was a drinker then, & maybe the worst kind. I'd go on holy mission drunks, look for God in the worst places. I had this idea that it was only in the worst & best of the world that anything holy might appear to me. Pain & beauty are both experienced as a kind of suffering"

The story up to this point was pretty much the same, though with Gretta he drank red wine & with Christa he smoked a fine blunt. Gretta matched him glass for glass. Christa loved ganja as much as hard fucking but she took a little coaxing with both.

"I lived in a city for awhile & got to know its alleys, the parks where the cops let the bums stay awhile, the beat restaurants & coffeeshops. I'd been there long enough to have something of a separate identity in these places. I needed it sometimes, & then after awhile needed to get back to my payjob—

"I even had a few buddies down & out, they knew little about me, I let a fractured narrative grow up about an alcoholic, used to be a lawyer maybe, now disabled, maybe a little bit sick—something like that—"

The next part he told Gretta, not Christa, the wine slowed him a bit, the ganja hurried him along, no real explain in that—

"Some of my buddies had seen real hard times. One had been in the military, the Marines he claimed, but he was proud & haunted by it both. That's really putting it wrong.

"Another had done some jail time for some violent things. Now he was old & tired, not much flared up his old temper.

"We'd meet & drink coffee, & I'd spike our drinks with cheap whiskey, & most of it was bullshit, which suited me fine but sometimes a word hits a nerve & someone goes off—old blood spill is fucking happening again, it's happening *now*.

"Sometimes it was just the place & the night. There was one park where you could get a clear view of the stars. I don't know, there weren't many streetlamps near or something, & we'd sit there drinking a jug of Dago red I got us, sipping it really, by the hour, letting it ride us through the night, we'd have our sleeping rolls & jackets, talking, talking, & sometimes not talking, & some cops would hassle us, & some wouldn't, they had moods & bad nights like anyone else, & the stories weren't much mostly, usually about things we didn't have & wanted. Women. Good food. Better health. A bed to sleep in that wasn't a residents hotel or shelter."

Gretta nodded & said nothing. Her hometown Seattle had its population of homeless & poor. She could see Bowie hunkered down among them, finding something there the rest of his life—

"One guy told a story of how he lost his wife & every time he told it we'd end up arguing over it. He said it wasn't natural, what happened, how she should have survived that fire, how the fire never should have started in the first place, how it wasn't his fault or her fault but it damned well was somebody, or *something's* fault. He was sure of that."

Gretta & Christa both get to hear this story though Christa's alternatively begins "I knew a guy once who told me & some buddies a story" & so on.

"He said they lived in New Mexico, a little town in the desert, where she was from & where he moved to when they got married. They'd met on a Greyhound bus, & traveled til they had no money or options left but go home, her home, marry & set up shop."

He'd pause. Gretta nodded again, a good listener. Christa would nod too, but impatient. His stories made her restless & uncertain. Maybe it was the ganja.

"So they came home & it took awhile to explain to everyone in town who & what he was. Her family was willing enough, figuring she was bound soon for catting it up, might as well have a ring on. He knew enough about fixing cars during the week, & when to kneel & sing at Mass on Sunday, to find his shallow place in things.

"They had a small house, she kept it clean & he worked part-time at her uncle's garage fixing cars while this uncle drank tequila & worked on his system for beating the lotto system. I don't even know if New Mexico has a lottery, always meant to look it up. Wouldn't be hard to find out."

Gretta laughs, pours them both more wine. Christa says nothing, listens restlessly.

"These were Spanish people, Catholics, full of that ribald piety people get when—"

"Ribald piety?" Gretta snorts.

"Yah. They lived close to God but like you would a tribal father. There were moments when God's creation just seemed ridiculous to them."

"Ridiculous how?" asked Christa. Gretta just nodded.

"They'd drink hard some Saturday nights. The preacher would show up, sometimes, & once in awhile he'd take his fill of wine, & the talk would turn to God. God & sex. God & drink. God & the government. Sometimes the preacher would say something & everyone would fall down."

Bowie nodded, like that was that. "He wouldn't talk about the UFOs though. Not a word. They'd try."

"Why couldn't Jesus come back in a spaceship? Isn't that better than an E.T. invasion? They're there, Padre, you seen them as much as any of us."

"If he was drinking his share, the Padre would nod, mumble a prayer. Once he said, 'Whatever they are, they fly in God's skies & come from God's stars. They are God's strange angels.' If he was sober he would fuss around the picnic tables on the edge of town where we would gather with our jugs & home-made tortillas, he would growl about our lapses to attend church, or our obvious hangovers."

"The night it happened was a windy one. High, dusty winds, everyone indoors before dusk, nothing visible. My friend would insist, every single time, that Rosie had not gone out, had stayed in with him & their cats. He would begin to yell & we had to calm him down just to get him to go on, because he *would* go on. He had to tell it, it was the only story he cared about, & nothing since had mattered."

Gretta nodded, sipped. Christa would take Bowie's hand, hope the story would be quick. It was too spooky & the ganja was very strong.

"But in the morning they found him with the door wide open, & it was easy to see by all the dust & scatter that it had been open during the storm. The morning was clear, sunny, like no dust storms had ever existed. But Rosie was gone."

Bowie nodded to himself mostly. "Paul could barely talk. His clothes were filthy. He wasn't drunk but he wasn't right. Finally he started in."

"Was she mad? Did she walk out to cool off? You two fight sometimes."

"No. It was a peaceful night. I fell asleep in that armchair right there. She was reading one of her science magazines. We had the radio on. I was tired, light-headed. I didn't tell her. It was nothing. I fell asleep watching the storm, the way it clouded our window. Look at that window! That was all. I fell asleep. Rosie was reading."

"The police in town investigated, no signs of blood or a fight. Nothing. Her clothes & books were in their spots. Half the town walked right into the desert, calling, looking for clues."

Christa is too high for any more. She touches his arm. He smiles. Gretta nods, sips, listens.

"Paul didn't say anything strange for months. He didn't say much at all. Rosie's family surrounded him with love, comfort. He had loved their Rosie as they had; all were bonded forever in this sorrow."

"There was a party, months had gone by. It was high school graduation & the town was

ready to ease up. A lot of tension rode through it, the kind only singing & dancing & wine foolishness under a great big moon can help to cure. When Paul showed up, neatly dressed, smiling, the night seemed totally blessed.

“Rosie had a cousin, Paula, & everyone but Paul knew that Paula had a crush on him. She wasn’t pushy, & she knew nobody really thought anything would happen. Paula was leaving the town, going to college, people figured she’d move along—

“But Paula wasn’t what people thought, & in truth she knew Paul better than anyone else in the town. It had happened by accident. After a week or so of looking & calling, the search for Rosie dwindled. Nobody said it to Paul but everyone assumed she was gone. It was time to mourn, to accept. Out of respect for him, people gave him his space, murmured their grief to each other in private.

“Paula knew more than anyone did. She had seen Rosie that afternoon, knew Rosie was going, & might not return. She told nobody. But she looked at Paul secretly in those early days & felt wild with guilt. She couldn’t have told him where she was, but she could have told him more than anyone else knew.

“Paula spent a lot of time in the desert; her obligations to high school were fewer. Teachers were assured of her future & let her have her extra time. She wasn’t dating anyone so none of the adults in her life worried.

“Paula was alone one afternoon, wandering the scrub & cacti, when she saw Paul. He was a distance from her, crouched down, still, maybe in deep thought.

“She wanted to leave him be, knew that would be best, but she knew from giggling nights with Rosie what kind of man he was. She knew if he would ever look at her, her smooth body under clunky clothes meant to keep boys away, listened to her thoughts, the books she read & could quote, & add to, he would want to take her. She knew this without obsessing on it. Her trick that year was to fake a schoolgirl crush on him for the town’s satisfaction, while bearing a woman’s quiet, erotic rush for him, nobody knew. He was not a man to notice much less act on a schoolgirl crush, so even as she approached him, waving her hand awkwardly to get his attention, her real attraction was hidden safely between swathes of deception—

“He didn’t look up but nodded at her. She’d never been alone with him. She felt light.”

Gretta suggested they take a walk outside. She was cramped & feeling loopy. The story had amused her, involved her, now it was starting to bother her.

The sky was a dark bath of bright lights, & Gretta lit up a hookah pipe as they sat on her porch, third floor of an apartment building in the hills a few miles from Luna T’s Cafe. The city was noise & movement distantly below.

Bowie sucked the pipe, twice, & resumed telling. “He asked her what books she had with her. She started, inside, & looked at her thin volumes like they were poisonous creatures, then cohered. ‘Nothing. Research. They’re not even really books. They’re articles I sent away for & they came in binders.’

“He didn’t look up. Paula wondered if she should leave. She didn’t want to. She really didn’t want to.

“‘I have an interest in science. That’s going to be my major next fall.’

“‘Why?’

“‘Why. Nobody asked that. Why? Fuck. Because I’m a geek girl?’

“‘Because of the *loco* shit that happens out here,’ she heard herself say.

“He looked up. He smiled. She felt like a goofy kid. ‘Yah. I’ve been wondering about

that too.'

"It was clumsy talk at first. Their connection was Rosie but not a word about her. Paul didn't ask easy questions. After awhile, he just talked. Eventually, about Rosie.

"Something's out here. I've known that since I lived here. Something live, & it's not human. But I don't know what that makes it.

"When I first met Rosie, before we even talked on the bus, I saw her reading a book. She told me later it was alternative theory. She said you hear the same old shit from hippies & Indians & UFO nuts. It was like people thought they were onto something when they weren't. They were mouthing what everyone else was saying. I asked myself, "OK, how do I break this? How do my ideas come from *here*," her head, "& in *here*," her heart, not from someone else?"

"Paula listened, said nothing. Paul smiled, a devilish half-smile, 'When she pointed to heart I let myself look at her chest & then I blushed like a nut. She smiled back. "It's OK, you're wired to like them." I nodded but didn't look again. She had leaf-shaped earrings. I watched them.

"I asked her what alternative history meant. "Isn't that like science fiction or New Age?"

"She moved across the aisle to my seat. Tucked herself right in. "Maybe, man. I mean you could say that." I thought she would say more but she started telling me about her town, here.

"This town is small but it's on the edge of this big desert. I've been out there since I was little. The people in town say UFOs fly over at night. They're spooked. They spook their kids. They make up stories to be spooked even more. They wish the town was like Roswell.

"I never believed any of it. Do you know why?"

"Dreams" Paul quotes Rosie saying, & hears Paula quoting her too. The words echo between them. They look at each other.

"She was my cousin, We were close."

"He nodded. The moment passed, but didn't. Everything that happened from then on echoed that moment when they revealed to each other what they both knew."

lxiii. / xxvi. / iii.

Figure where the magick & artillery cross, conjure, do, the night its old lure & assure to take, unsure, what the bravest gesture in any troubled hour? One word, the next, the next? Riddled fields of golden beam, only dreaming, lean-limbed creatures feeding close, only dreaming, while kings plan the blood needed to move maps, no dreaming. What lost when the Empire recks too many voices? What lost when power drips too freely from a single fist? What lost when the great mass of moving men slow, consider each his bonds & how attached to every of his fellows? What lost when faces look up for sunlight not a sky papa to discipline & train? What lost when this hour's hunger is told, when a little less given to someday's coffers & hunger? What lost when something new possible that does not simply add its pebble atop the long lived hill in the unexplored great woods of the world?

Reck the many voices, reckon better what remains when long since the last bones fallen.

Maya wakes between worlds, the nether lands between wake & dream, when all is true, when



truth is not king, hardly serpent, woke & thought here is the crack I wanted, this, I want to go to him, I want to see him & see if this discovers anything to either of us—

A thousand sparks, a movement across the spacelessness of reality, the adjustment that is wrongly distinguished as here & there—she does not want to materialize—no, this is cross time like no time & through space like breathing—

I see him, it's night, there's an elevated highway overhead, I see fires in trashcans, men standing in groups. He's apart, alone. Not in danger. He isn't quite one of them but they look out for him.

There he is, but how? What kind of space does he occupy? His face is intense, abstracted. Deep, inner space, can I enter, breathe into this space & know it?

Dylan. Maya. We haven't met yet. We know each other. Yes. We have met. Time isn't much, is it? It's enough to limit & define but not a god. Do we know each other then? Yes of course but not yet too. I don't know if that helps. I don't know either. You came to see me. Yes. Do you want to tell me more? I just wanted to see you, to know what this means. Don't we decide that? I think so. Are you going to stay with me? I'm arriving to you.

Where the magick & artillery cross. What that place, when it possible to turn a fist to fingers, a soldier back to a man, a citizen to a nameless creature

riddled fields of golden beam, lean-limbed creatures feeding close, while kings plan the blood needed to move maps, watching the dull mass of moving men, fat from years of steady feeding, blurry to the blunt demands of want & quick demise, we're not ready for the War, not close, we move through countless minor blood dramas & call it a full, worldly life—

What's lost when the Empire recks too many voices, oh shit, none of this is sturdy for what tonight breaks bones in other lands—ink for moo-cows, yet are War's leaner, swifter moves preferable, anything?

Maya sighs & falls back from Dylan, from the night, from the poor men & their fires & their chatter—falls back but not to resume, remains an arc through, an arcing, not yet a from & to—

lxiv. / xxvii. / iv.

Music twists new sugars from ripe debris, pulsing iron streetlamps, nodding traffic lights, carnivorous roar of midnight freeway,
sentiment for a voice in shapely remain—
yet nothing, little, less, & changed, & always changing,
Shifting faces, some sweet hours of moonlight's easy wane
The drums, a loud shout, a dozen, it goes, all goes
Yet some still wait a melody, a man's long death in an old blue house, his memories the fine thing of love & delusion—

tell me any of it means anything—
 there were nights, there were hours, there was sugar between the knives—
 what of the boxes of man-gods & their pleas to suffer quietly the passing years, feed &
 breed & consume & die?
 leave to kings the matters of maps & history?
 tell me any of it means anything—go on!
 the afternoons in sum & snow, the steps through youth's frenetic wants, its great arcing
 ignorance?
 And what since to argue slant to this ignorance? Passing, & more passing. Wars &
 wares, each in turn—

A woman tends her stripling, ducks old wants in the child's bathwater, makes him
 splash & laugh. What did any of it matter anyway. A dream, subtle healings in a crushed,
 dead heart. Something, close, secret, mine, oh yes dear some echoes continue forever, tonight,
 another, & on, some do not nod & part cleanly—

What cumes is futility, boredom
 hungers grown broad & dull & near
 impossible to feed

beauty, crack its bones & suck down
 what is light & weak—

Nothing goes away & nothing remains,
 learn this, dear, what lesson I
 could not give you myself, love stains,
 love bloods, everything & nothing & by
 the years unimaginable something—

Others, too, countless, by the species, by the fallen soldier, in turn. Whatever the best spasm,
 it has to be enough.

Christa waits for Bowie & maybe it goes long, she sits, hours, sits & waits, says nothing, what
 to say, I'm waiting him, he left me here because I'd be safe from—

But I get restless, he woke me up from the bones of my old days, from what I had been, I don't
 know what I'd been, it seemed to involve no & denial & something else—they talked about
 God too but I never felt him nearby—he seemed like another rule of the house—

I get restless & I have a bright mind & a roused body & you left me here because I'd be safe
 but what's safe, Bowie? I wasn't safe going along with you, smoking your hash & sucking your
 cock, breaking those old bones & feeling my own—

So I get restless & I begin to walk around the place you left me, see what I've got to reck—&

the men along the bar look me over, sometimes twice, but none move near with a word—

Gretta comes over to me after playing with her band. We look at each other.

“Why did he leave here? Why did he leave you?”

“I don’t know. At first I thought he was loving it too much. Getting attached. Getting close.”

“No.”

“He doesn’t belong to anything, Christa. Not to a woman, not to a place.”

“Is there more?”

“You have to move along with him, change with his changes. Soon it won’t look anything like it did, & you’ll keep going or you won’t.”

“Is that what you did?”

“Nothing’s over between us, that’s not how things are. That’s why you’re here.”

“He wants us both?”

Gretta is beautiful, old enough to be my mother, dressed like knowing, I don’t know what her words mean, how she uses one for every ten she could use—

“Tell me”

“Nothing you don’t know or won’t be allowed to find out. It’s up to you how far you go with truth or love. Any of it.”

I get restless & find out there’s more to this bar, this cafe, in the back, there’s more to Luna T’s as I go looking for it—I’m restless, I’m hungry—Bowie left me here safe & I don’t know what that means or how far it can go—

Tend your stripling, dear, how many, how old? The questions will never get answered, not those, not others, not any. I don’t wonder so much at you as how I let all that gold about me get away—but see I’m good at wondering—back & back—I can remember another woman, oh the tits & face on her—& how I had to cringe when shadow of her mother came ‘round—how I loved her too! The poems, the hard jerks through my heart as she too in her turn let sweetness bang about—harder & harder—another’s words, & another’s—until a man’s hands took her & I was briefly lost in that wet elastic excitement of a new lover & thereafter—well, what?

I can remember back further, other women who later bathed their broods & measured their solid ground—

So consider me from afar, these words whose ancestors I offered you, a hundred songs, more, & you thought ceaseless no matter what you fucked, what fun & necessity you got from life for yourself—

Consider these words not a well-wishing but an exorcism—you were more for my love, less for your betrayal—

Christa finds the hills, finally, the trees rising impossibly tall to that gorgeous fat tit full moon & what seas of stars to behold? Loveliness! Freedom. That bonfire. Those drummers. How good can it all be?

What, if anything, from other good & bad nights, what?
 But shut up on that old shit a minute & look: near Luna T's Cafe, same city block,
 something new, tall,
 tis the Noah Hotel,
 it's been there awhile, really, but closed years, now it's open,
 they call it the No-Tell because of what happens there—
 & somehow there begins a two-way bleed between the No-Tell & Luna T's Cafe—
 What was the moment?

It was someone who walked in looking to see if what he remembered about T's was true—did he?

Dylan was somewhat changed, his face a bit leaner, hair longer, shaggier. Thinner. He wore full his still few years & sometimes a few extra. Hours pass, some hurt, linger, some are beautiful, linger, hurt more, Dylan didn't always bear the words but he knew better now than once—

He still stood apart most times but his smile was more often, even kinder. No-Tell had a coffeeshop & while he'd started there as extra help eventually the bosses numbered too many who'd come & gone & Gravy had put him in charge.

Gravy seemed to run the No-Tell though it wasn't always so clear. Did he own it? Dylan didn't think so. Sometimes Dylan was closing up when Gravy ambled in with a pint. Maybe a few friends & an all-night card game. Maybe sad, incoherently sad, & Dylan would listen.

His dream that morning had bothered him so much all day, a visit from Gravy would have been fine. None.

He didn't dream about her often, enough, he tried to remember her evenly, let that much rest in his heart, but the dreams would inflame him for days—Gravy knew, had a nod for it, nod & a phrase, "Dylan's on his Blues Cruise," he'd say. Not angry. Protective in his own way.

Gravy was a criminal, Dylan supposed, though not like any he'd ever imagined. He would conduct his business in the coffeehouse sometimes, whether it was hiring a new maid or selling a load of rifles. Never asked Dylan to keep mum, knew Dylan wasn't the telling kind.

Yet they weren't especially close. There were moments but they didn't build up. Dylan liked it this way. It was what it was.

This dream, this particular one, had been coming. Maya was looking for him. She was near. Dylan shivered. She'd left an instruction for him, in this dream.

A choice, really. If he were to do something, she would continue. If he didn't, she would withdraw. His choice to believe this dream, his choice to act. But the instruction was clear.

In the back room was a small window, sealed, dirty with decades, behind tall rack filled with discarded boxes half-filled with debris. If he moved the rack, scrubbed the window clean, he would see where he needed to go to begin to near Maya as she had neared him until now, when she stopped to give him his choice.

He tried to shake it, tried to lose himself to the day, tried to let it go. But nothing can distract a heart from itself. Not for long.

He let the Cafe stay open past 3, 4, 5. Past 6. No customers. Not even a hotel staffer

looking to waste a few minutes on the clock. Dylan turned off the neon signs, locked the door, took off his cap. Found window cleaner & a rag.

Trip Town isn't back on TV per se but—well, it's complicated—the network stopped showing it but it showed up on random local stations months later—at first reruns but not really—not much—I have a hard time explaining—

It was again a presence at places like Luna T's Cafe but more secretive—at the No-Tell, too, it appeared on some TV screens—

A matter of power—it would not depart—end—too many people were too involved—time was rigged for its benefit—

The drinkers at Luna T's bar were watching Dylan clean the window of the No-Tell's cafe's back room to reveal Luna T's itself through the glass. Dylan struggled & pushed open the window & wiggled through with a lot of effort—

They watched him approach the bar where they sat—

“That's the kid.”

“He's coming here!”

“Are we on TV?”

“We already talked about that. We decided we can't know.”

He doesn't enter through the bar's door but another, unused & obscure. Enters, & remembers—he was here—Maya is bringing him here—she will come—*she will*—

“I thought this show got cancelled.”

“Do we look cancelled to you?”

He's in the bandroom, the drinkers can see that, wonder will he come into the bar? He starts to, then turns. Now he's walking toward the stage & past it deeper into Luna T's.

“Aww, man! I thought he was coming in here!”

“Go chase after him! It's your chance to be a star!”

“Balls. I just wanted to say hi.”

Dylan walks in deeper, remembering but hazy. Will he find Maya or will she find him? He feels younger, wilder, looking for her, remembers the bridge he lived under, the men he knew there, remembers meeting her on the bus to see the ocean his friend had put him on, remembers meeting Maya, allows himself this, remembers the White Woods & meeting John, & the old man in the cafe, how hours & days & places crossed & re-crossed, & time crumbled & there was that rooming house he lived in, & what happened? How does here & there, then & now sum? What's missing? Is this the first time he was here, again?

He keeps walking because that's sometimes all the option a moment gives.

There, a puddled route away, no more dreams of blood on canvas, maybe no dreams at all, or all dreams, just not this straddling, this nobody-fucking-knows save for the cranks who smile or frown too much & claim they do—Just away! No music struck from fragging bone chips.

Away.

A housefly licks the key in the hand who won my fame. I would burn it & go but letting it stay seems the harder move, better. Through the window, through the puddle, there, & now there, & now gone. How? But yes, somehow.

The rain shudders those framed hills & this hour passes. I watch it pass on a pink clock-radio shaped like a kitty cat. Watch the cat trickling away the hour. The fly licks & licks. A buzz, a break, now trickling, now gone. I let a part of me leave these blood canvases, go, crack the window, through, hit that puddle hard, slip, don't fall, begin to run, run, this is delicious I don't need any of it, run & run, I don't know when I've stopped for awhile, don't know I'm still in this room for a longer while, I want to know what & why, bloody canvases don't explain, I'd stop them if I could but no this hand, my fame, I've said that already, it hurts, will you believe me & take me for good this time? I mean it—I can't take this cycle of dream—blood—wake—canvas—tell me how—the window is locked & I can't break it—

It was a short time of intense fame, that's what's worst about it. I wanted, I got it, it was nearly random, & then it was gone. I'm not sure how. My marriage came & went with it. I was left with a friend, his hookah, his fucking boxes of Dead shows on cassette. But he stayed. He emerged with me from all that. When it got worse, he stayed. When I ended up in the room with the floor of ice, he was still there. Then I was gone & he's probably still in that apartment with his hookah & his Dead show cassettes—

My canvases were an hour's golden titan. My blood canvases, my *fucking* blood canvases. Three dozen of them, then no more. I wouldn't know how. I'd like to say this was all a ruse, but no. It wasn't. In truth it was *way more* fucked up & esoteric than anyone knew.

I thought it was over when I stopped painting, when I turned my sorry ass on him & ran. I look now & see that it wasn't enough. I wasn't strong enough to cut every last secret tie in my heart with what he was, what he wanted to do, what he did. He was as maniacal, blackly obsessed as my hookah friend was calm, easy flowing. I see them right now, never met, probably never inside a thousand miles of each other & yet both here, now. And my Aussie friend, how do I arrange him in this? And my wife? Was she just what that lunatic plucked from his numbers & planted in my grasp? Was she married to me only while I was latched to him?

Is anything ever that fucking obvious?

And now you ask about the golden bird returning, & the light bulbs, & that *fucking film*—& I don't know. I thought maybe if I could arrange one thing, the rest would align. Nothing aligns. They jig around me crazy, me crazy. Me crazy.

lxvii. / xxx. / vii.

Back on the Bridge of Glass & I decide I'm not going to fall, I was brought here, or I brought myself here, & now I know there are others, one is called Maya, we are connected to each other, it's a lot. I stop. Breathe deeply a few times. A *fucking* lot. But OK, so be it, my life was shit, I was playing it out, & can't say I wasn't hoping for a few less innings if I had a choice.

Didn't think I had one, didn't come close to thinking this. What I thought was: don't think. And especially: don't *remember*. But that didn't leave much else.

Where it, God, life, whatever, got me was at night, my dreams. I thought this was one, or one that didn't end. Something. Dreams brought it all back, Penny, 'Stina, my granpa, the whole nut fucky arc, it's like I loop back into it knowing how it ends but thinking I have a chance still, this turn not that one, this word not that silence, the possible, the doomed—

I started reading books again, not all sorts like I used to, I was on a single chase. Books on dreams. They were the remain of my life, & they wouldn't let up. Was there something I could do about them? I'd known a lot of high, unhappy people over the years & more than a few were spooky full of ideas about death, God, reality, dreams. They'd show me books, movies, TV shows. I'd read a few pages, pass a pipe & watch. It passed the time & the funny fucking thing—

the really funny fucking thing

is that I was happy for awhile there. I was what I seemed for awhile. I told Penny in bed one night, before 'Stina ever came around, that my grandpa wouldn't condemn me.

"He had no use for governments. Said a president was a bureaucrat with a secret crown on his head. He said a man needed enough hours & breathing room in his head to figure some things out along the way. Most would decide to marry, make a family, settle in to one place, care for it. A few would rob banks or lead wars. A few would see something missing from the world & decide to write it in, or paint it, or preach it.

"Sonnyboy, all the government does is profit from the decent plain inclinations most of us have, & squelch, try to squelch the rest. Most men aren't going to rob or pillage. Most aren't going to create anything but a few chicks. So taxing them & policing them & parenting them isn't going to do much good. We end up crowded into some places, too spaced out & lonely in others. Angry & restless, we spend money & eat too much. Look at the moon & see something foreign & meaningless. Never learn to grow our own food or think our own damned thoughts, whatever they are.'

"Penny smirked at me. 'He said that word for word?'

"He said lots of things, some of them over & over. He told me I'd have to make decisions someday about things I could not imagine then. Things he couldn't advise or warn me about.

"Just try to listen to yourself in more than one way. What's your belly saying? How about your heart? Are your loins arguing yea or nay? The answer's in there somewhere. It might be pretty, might not."

Then maybe I was less happy over time, & when 'Stina came into my life maybe I was looking for a crack in things. Not her, would have been something else. A cop, a car crash.

The books on dreams were mostly garbage, not even good wishful thinking. Dream astrological signs & dream dictionaries. I tried Freud, Jung, the longhair stuff. Again, not much, better

than the newsstand trash but still.

The only thing that seemed to hook me was the idea of lucid dreaming. It didn't seem so much a promise as a tool. A way to work some shit out. I was sober but tired. But I had a little left in my tank & decided to play it.

I didn't exactly become the king of daylight but I did find enough coherence to keep going. No more dealing. And no more women. That was an easy & hard choice. They were still around, my eyes still looked, my body still pulled, they still wiggled & sometimes smiled. But I knew some part of me, some important piece, was burnt & gone just surviving all that had happened with 'Stina & Penny. I wanted, I could have had, but I mostly refrained.

I say mostly. Do dreams count? I'm not sure. As I got better at lucid dreaming, became an oneironaut if you can figure that, I found all sorts of benefits. It's deep down there, & daylight laws do not apply. It was easy & obvious for awhile til I got bored. I pushed a little, it got bloody, kinky. I pushed a little more.

That's when I met Benny.

Snap. Sparkle. *Fuck. Benny.* He knows! He can tell me. I'm probably on this fucking bridge because of *him*.

Benny Big Dreams. He came into my dream-life so slyly that I didn't notice him for the longest time. Then I did but he'd tangled himself with me. I made agreements he made me keep.

He knows, that motherloving bastard.

Dreams, when you get down into the murk of them, it becomes impossible later to sort them, which one came first, even distinctions between them fail. It's all one dream, to half-quote that hippy singer. So I can only guess when he first appeared. He could have been a log or a cloud too. I have an idea though. It was when I began to get good at them, at world-building, then at world-breaching, then at border-erasing.

When I say it's all one dream, I really mean this. All one dream. As much as this material world is one kind of place. Dreams, mine, yours, tonight's, tomorrow night's, all glints off one diamond.

So why don't people know? Because they think: sleep, dream. Bed. Eyes closed. Wake up, get up, go. Dreams are fundamentally different, at least some ways. I learned all this slowly, but I learned. I had no other choice. My dice were thrown.

Benny appeared in a street of skulls, or as a street of skulls. It was near sunset, I was very alone. The world was careening before me, I watched sun & moon come & go, but it was still nearly dusk, the light wasn't changing unusually, there were waves passing overhead, but sometimes there were missiles, & it was flu that had killed everyone but then it was stones, I was lost, I hadn't been this lost in awhile, there was no hook, not a word, not an icon, I couldn't find the ground solidly & half-hovered, loose, the street in this small town, one main street, filled with

skulls, paved with them, some old, nearly powder, some still hung on by recent flesh, I couldn't handle it when—

wait. Think. What. Think!

A skull winked at me. I can't say how, but I smiled, I breathed, I steadied, calm. The skulls retreated to small stones. The waves & missiles became hard, stormy clouds, but no more unfamiliar than that. The dream cooled, & leaving was easy.

Maybe Benny had been around long, I can't know. But I noticed him, I remembered the wink. A new presence. A wink of one.

Later he was more plain. Later. It's just not how dreams work. Think of time as a field, endless field. No before or after. No center. Endless so always more to know.

Sometimes I've thought of him as my friend. I've seen him kind, even selfless. But not always. He's not tame, & I don't know his motives.

Last I saw of him, I think, was that shot, whatever it was, he was part of that, & then I was here. And I don't sleep or eat here. I don't dream. I figured I was dead. What was left?

If this Bridge of Glass is dreaming, it's somewhere in that field I never knew existed. Not even close.

lxviii. / xxxi. / viii.

No waiting. No yearn. Tis arrival. No Penny. No Shawn. No Preacher. But I found my doll. I called her Tweety Bird. Nobody liked that name. Shawn didn't mock it like the rest. He just said that's your kind of name, Gen. He smiled. He loved me back then.

Nobody knew why I left with Preacher. They didn't stop me. That wasn't possible. They didn't meet Preacher. I didn't let them. He was my answer, what nobody had given me until then.

Tweety Bird is in bad shape. She's in pieces. I've walked to town, I'm going to fix her. I'm in farm country, nowhere I know. No people out, just a truck once in awhile. I found Tweety Bird in a ditch. Just lying there. In pieces. I gathered her up, & then a truck appeared, a cowboy offering a ride. He was old, shaven, too curious, but harmless. Dropped me off in town with a nod. Still curious.

I sit on a bench, consider Tweety. I need strong glue. That should work. Look around, see a hardware store. Its window has snowmen & other Xmas decorations. Oh. It will do.

I walk slowly. Whatever this is, all of this. I'll work with it. I'll try.

I walk into the store with my busted dolly & the old man in the chainstore vest gives me a hello.

"I need some heavy-duty glue."

"I see that. Got yourself a job there."

"Her name is Tweety Bird. She was mine as a child. I found her again. She needs fixing."

"We got glue over here. Nice quick-drying epoxy."

"Good. I'll look these over."

"Gonna make someone a present, are ya?"



AbandonView

"I don't know yet. I might fix her & keep her for myself."

He laughs with me but I can feel he's edging back a little. Grownup women don't repair dolls & keep them. Maybe I'm just paranoid.

I'm trying to remember her, in truth, what she was like. I'm sure I gave her an elaborate personality, told her all my secrets. I bet I have more now & I still don't have anyone to tell them. So maybe she'll do again. That collie wouldn't come with me.

Preacher wasn't always around, as the years went by. He had himself a harem, sure, but sometimes he was absent tending it. Maybe he had harems in other cities.

First time I fucked a man wasn't my first overall, but this time I knew what I was doing. You get the pleasures you arrange for.

It was fraud for flesh's pleasure. Simple. The man I yearned for I couldn't tell, couldn't tell myself very clearly, so I worked what I had to feel better, feel something.

Some became boyfriends. I promised nothing. They fed on my thighs' demands. Suffered when I ceased. Feeding a delusion takes variety.

I sit on a bench, a different one? I don't know. It's cold. I don't care. Trucks pass once in awhile. I don't look close. I have my bottle of glue. The hardware store man sold me some rubber bands too. He warmed up to my project after a bit. I think he decided I was going to sell the doll at an antique market or online or something. He would have made the repair himself but I smiled no.

The man who loved me most was married. He fed on my thoughts, my feelings about things. He didn't try to own me with gifts or rough, weird sex. I liked him. I nearly told him about Preacher. Instead I ended it badly. Ended it so it would stay ended. It had been weeks, maybe a couple of months but I remember him best of all of them.

Tweety Bird is glued & bound in rubber bands looping her at several angles. I'm still trying to remember her. Getting colder, getting darker. No more traffic. Snow soon maybe.

I passed a motel walking to town. Vacancy sign. I feel a plastic credit card in my pocket. OK. I haven't waked up, wherever I am I'm here for the night at least.

So I walk out of town the long way to the motel when a pickup drives by & stops. The hardware store man.

"Need a ride?"

"Up to the motel"

"Not far. Get in."

"Thanks."

"Ma'am, are you OK?"

"I think so."

"We don't see many lone women in town carrying broken dolls around. No offense."

"None taken. I came to see my brother. I don't think he lives around here anymore."

"What's his name?"

"It doesn't matter."

We pull up at that moment. He smiles at me, shy but still curious. I'm like a new & exotic toy to him. He then surprises me. Reaches into his overalls & pulls out not money but a business card.

"We don't like to see anyone in trouble around here, strangers included. You need to, call that number on there. I might help or I might know somebody who can."

His name is Grant. I smile at him. Leave his truck without a word. He waits while I ring for the motel owner, sign in, get my key, every step. I wave as I leave the motel office & walk in the wind & flakes to my room. I hear him drive off as I enter & close the door.

"We're here" I say to Tweety Bird.

Here. Well, then. First thing I notice is that both pictures on the wall are the same. This is funny, but I don't laugh, not yet. I may need one later. A single bed with one pillow. OK, that's about right. No Preacher or Preacher substitutes tonight, & my hardware store friend didn't make a move. Enough of one. A sly look at my tits & ass really doesn't count. Enough.

Shit! Horny again. "Been like this for years, Tweety. Not much to get me started." Not much more to stop me either but I don't say this to Tweety. She's recovering, needs hope, a laugh. OK, I've got one saved, now a reason.

A TV. A curtained window. Hey, even a mini-fridge. Styling. I picked well.

Now what? I've greeted my night's environs, what now? Does the cosmos tell me what now, please?

What now, *please?*

OK maybe not yet. Gotta be patient. Universe probably gets as many queries as Santy Claws. My turn will come.

The bed is old, soft, not broken, not cheap. The walls painted a creamy yellow, not chipping. The curtains are thick & dark red. This place is simple but it is taken care of. There's a solid lock on the door. I'm OK here tonight, no enemy but what lurks through my head.

I lay in my clothes on top of the bedspread holding Tweety Bird in my arms, thinking & thinking til I'm not thinking til I'm sound asleep & surrounded by dream figures, still on my hotel bed, still holding Tweety Bird who's still mending from her injuries.

They're talking to me like I understand, even like I'm not very important to the plan. I want to prove myself but nobody seems to notice or care.

Two especially among at least several more. Men, bearded, somewhat serious, even their humor has a grim bite to it, a knowingness one gets or doesn't get.

"When does this thing come together?"

"Soon, I'm guessing."

"Better. We know what's at stake."

"Nobody's doubting."

They don't look at me but I feel I'm involved. I take a chance with the one new bit of information I have to hand.

“What about Grant? Does he know? Will he help us?”

They both freeze like squirrels in rush hour. Ha. All of them are looking at me.

“We don’t know about him yet.”

“She’s right. Getting to be time to decide.”

Peering at me, nipping my face with close stare, the first one says, “What do you think?”

I open my mouth, but nothing. I try again, then the third time some noises. They wait.

“He seemed OK. He gave me a ride when I needed one. Didn’t try to fuck me. Seemed to understand his place in things & accept it. So I say, yah.”

They nod, convinced. Pleased even. Because of my certainty or who I was certain about? I can’t know.

lxix. / xxxii. / ix.

Come, then, & tell me the shade between remembrance’s scent & nostalgia’s stink. Tell me. I don’t know it but maybe in my art some try to discern it as space, space with music, with name, with possibility. Maybe.

To be mortal is a sense of time passing, aging, growth, change. What coming, what gone. Sentiment for babies, for precious little growing things. For the gentle in music & touch. To be mortal is nearly ever to be in a state of *going*.

Where I sit tonight furies me with sentiment nigh on real sadness. Harvard Square, Cambridge, Massachusetts. I was young here, maybe another day I will be old here. Not yet. Not ready.

Many streetlamps. Talkers & coffee. Chess the puzzle & its solution, if any

Sun by moon, world bides its wicked, its pain makers & flesh eaters & greedy beasts for time & dirt. Bides, humors, bows. Eventually, cracks & crushes. One after the next, every one of them is buried old or sick or defeated. Any comfort in this? Wicked’s always on the move & never seals airless & permanent its command.

World bides the sudden scatter of good blood, of wasted fruit, of hurry in praise & slow in vanquish. How explain to a stripling that men do good & ill alike, that none immune to the sway of either kindness or greed? That one man builds his mansion on a purse got from chewing bones & blood of many, welcomes smiling guests to his feast, serves only vegetables now, a man devoted to Godd & beasts, that once he broiled virgins alive to blood their secret magick juice, that once he collected knives & axes to cut his captured enemies piece by screaming piece? Or the man in war who carries those fallen roughly & slowly through the blazing wrecked fields, not a scholar or an artisan, his plumbing tools await him in a far home, his dear lover, their plans for a civil union, maybe adopt a child if laws against gay parents can be won through?

Good & evil are written in tomes & instructions for soldiers, this place, that year, a famine will shift them, a king’s madness shift them again, a peace treaty, a dark speech before thousands, shift again & again, what to do with it, any of it?

“Know that world bides, world wants, world seeds everywhere, world is home. Change is possible, happening, flush it with hope, flush through, not good nor bad but what causes

growth, ease, freedom. Where hope prospers, men & beasts & trees all live fruitfully. Where hope abides, wicked is better understood as hunger unfed, dream mocked, faith caged, desire etched in coin, fear a constant shadow between faces.

“World is home. Why do men restless range its miles? Why do men anxious plunder its juice & kill one another for what they do not own & will not carry to their places in the soil? Nothing. Men fancy up tales of faraway places where one goes upon decease, good peaceful places near answers for their suffering. Call these answers God. Call this faraway place by many names. No assurance but what others have vowed & envisioned. None. World is *home*. Need there be a faraway place & a man-shaped answer? Need one take a knee & mumble a rhyme to men-built statuary, regard holy some books more than others, some men dabbed exalted by other men? I don’t know but I do see & hear of every possible deed & word by men, the selfish act, the brutal one, the many others adjudged one way or another by the place & time & men involved. Tones build religions to stamp one idea or a cluster as central, prime, first, *start here*. None prove but by vow their claim. *World* is home. I believe the answers are here, & some are very plain & some are ornate, cosmic, transcendent. Not all the answers come from men, or are for men. Some are not in words. Some contradict others. Maybe for some questions there are no answers, & some two, & some countless. World *is* home. I don’t know what this means. I believe it is a hook, if not somewhere to begin then at least a hook, a handle, something like comfort.

“World is home. Dreaming you are safe in all—”

lxx. / xxxiii. / x.

Cosmic Early capped his pen & coughed hard, several times, there were nights like this, a few lines, clear, words like bells through an open full-moon field, then they’d stop. His body would shudder, again, harder, & he would write a few more words, try to leave off cleanly.

But other nights, too, endless, beautiful, years of hours, pen across pages, the ink blows up in many words, an exploding hustle of explain & cajole, the night turns close & soft from every direction, there is sweetness no matter the thought, his body becomes a clean window, small in its great building, framed by many vines, the air itself is music, adoring music—he rouses up the dreams & works fine with them—

You could call him a rival to Benny Big Dreams but—no—not simple—not competing—something between them—*something* the true, difficult word—

Benny was native to dreams, a creature made in them, a believer in their power, & their superiority, to waking life, where he’d never been, where he didn’t wish to go, what he barely regarded as valid space—

Cosmic Early was born a waking man, long ago, dreams had mildly accompanied & lightly hued his life for many years, there was a twisting moment, maybe several, & his life had changed—he’d met the crack between waking & dreams where neither is distinguishable, &

he'd acted, taken what was offered, & now—now he was at angles with Benny Big Dreams—who he'd met once—maybe twice—maybe never—dreams are not like that—

What made things more difficult for Cosmic Early than Benny Big Dreams is that he was live, mortal, & getting sicker more often—he knew a choice was coming—knew that he would meet Benny soon & not on equal ground—

Why hesitate? Why not go into Dreamland for good? For one thing, he wasn't sure a dead mortal could. For another, there were living people who counted on him, who he led, in a sense—

This is going to get more complicated—there are two dreams & everything crosses through them—two dreams & one contains the other—it will be a matter of holding close when nothing seems sensible or connecting—holding close when these pages seem lunacy—Rebecca are you paying dear mind?

Rebecca wakes. Looks at me in our bed, near. “What was that?” “I don't know.” “Were we in the same dream? Was Cosmic Early there?” “I don't know.” “Was it important?” “Yes.”

In the second, a 'scape from my nights, my secret sleeps, how I am able to wake & lead & write, running, we were posing as carnival statues in traveling mutant shows, a very long dream, longer by far than my usual, I woke with my head cracking the window & artillery lined up on the motel bed. She'd gone. Christa had gone. Bowie had come for her as long ago he told me he would.

In the first, what contained the second dream & gave its sickness, the one I have, what hollowed my plan of numbers to save the world, I sat by a motel window, a humbled Mexican elder, the music leading me on that dark moonbeam out, through blood & brush, & old lusts. Rosie came to me as long ago she'd promised to, she'd left everything, be my bloom, wear long pink scarves for me, gnaw my hungry naked teeth, through the storm I made for you, away from, yes, away, wake up, Rebecca, this involves us all!

Rebecca leaps out of bed. “Are we awake this time?” She looks at me but I'm not there.

Relax. Yes, you can hear me. Yes, I am writing in your head. It's OK. I know how to do this. Some might say it's the final arrival of language, I simply walk my words right within you. I am within you. I can't harm or change you but I am present. You hear me, this is how I do this now. I don't let many know. They think about me & books. I think you know better or, rather, *further* than that.

lxxi. / xxxiv. / xi.

Dylan watched the bird, the great bird, a beautiful bounty of flight, arc the sky like a comet, so beautiful, how can it be so beautiful? It brings pink hints of the dawn, seems an illuminated scrawl heralding sun, a thousand years pass, & a thousand years more, he watches, watches, for a century of moments bears awe, becomes awe, *is* awe—

Nearby, yet neither seeing the other, Christa watches the bird too, a great high powerful being, a rousing mystery to her deepest bones, why, her inmost wants, why, what has brought her to this hour lets her loose to watch, free, she's not chasing or chased, why? Can it ever be this simple? More watch, in loose groups & strays, watch this bird & see something wanted in its flight, something too deep to say one to any other, why? How this simple? How?

The last time I flew with the golden bird was a thousand years of flaming text across countless bloody canvas skies, how beautiful it was! How they watched, the ones so needing to see! Some of me is still there, this flight, it was I realized later the last canvas of all, all was crushed together & warped the world a little in extended flying cry—

The bird corrodes my hotel bed as I lie holding Tweety Bird & know nothing else. The ceiling breaks apart, cleanly down its middle, & then the great reach of star revealed breaks too, in infinite pieces, I don't know how to feel or think, the bird is on fire & we breathe alike, the bird knows me, the bird shakes me so far below, I am fire too, I feel my skin heat, crackle, crack, go, & not my demise but more of me to see, so much more, how possible as I burn down to bear more, be more?

When the bird hits the No-Tell, hits it high & hard, there is explosion & crack, all shakes hard, what can survive this? Hits, hard, crashes, the upper floors, what could result but calamity? There is light, there is cascading, chaotic light, it is beautiful like a far alien planet, it is beautiful like a death mask in moonlight, there is light everywhere, light echoes & amplifies, makes more light, different light, nobody injured, I cross through it, the Bridge of Glass rises & rises, carries me in familiar possession, & we join the light, pass in, become light, I am trying to explain yet I'm crying none of it mattered while it was happening, as bird & bridge & No-Tell passed through each other, nothing mattered, no struggle, no persuasion, there was arrival, for a moment no clash between hearts, arguments among book, for a moment all passed through all, each & many, so beautiful—

lxxii. / xxxv. / xii.

Woke seeing the world as a cage of coins, terrified, thrash to what as another thought, *an* other thought—

Or later riding an escalator & again this sense of *always* being on this escalator, riding, passing floors of activity, now a library's quiet shuffles, now a steamy kitchen with jingling smiling patrons—

cage of coins—

then again mornings on evilly crowded carriages full of bitter, quiet fellow proles, what to hate? How had any of it come to this? What else could there be?

I wrestled the word happiness & came up with *pleasure in presence* & this thought hung around me the day's toiling hours & on into tonight—

Could one travel high enough above the Labyrinthine—say, an elevator to the impossible heights of the No-Tell—say—arrive at the cage of gold coins atop its top—what see? Is there goal in this thought or another toy fancy in many boxes full?

Ahh. Umm.

There is a man who works at the No-Tell. Lives & works there. Have I said how it's set up there? Don't think so. The No-Tell is staffed by the poor of the city, the formerly homeless, the former addicts, & they live there in a segregated section, live there, work there, eat there too. It's how our friend Dylan ended up there, when the building he security guarded was torn down. He lives & works & eats at the No-Tell. He might know the man in question, he knows everyone, running the coffee shop there as he does.

This man—let's call him Noah for yet unknown reason—maybe it's simply what he calls himself—maybe not—his friends there call him No because they say No he's not the Noah who the hotel's named after—nobody knows *that* Noah.

So Noah—or No to be clear & precise & a bit familiar—No is a strange & gentle man, usually—not a young man, looks about what Dante called middle life—No has his dreams—No has them waking & sleeping—he's turned from drugs & drink—turned hard & silent from drugs & drink—says nothing save perhaps to Dylan one night & maybe not much then—

No believes that there was a moment—nameless years ago—when his fame beheld him, reached & nearly grasped him—close, nearly touching—

but not quite—then there were hours years lost nights in drink & broken sex, sinking from the glare of that fame to foul masters need made him kiss with salute—

worse, there were other, fewer hours when sunset beauties or a stray back of soft friendly fur—moments his masters forgotten, his fists open, nearly some explain for that fame which slipped through his heart, & gone,

he waits even now especially so, No waits like his suffering a cause others should raise too, waits, splotchy face on a canvas staring bluntly at all for a nod, a bow, close, he believes it's all close, worse,

he tells his friends as they gather sodden in the Common Room allowed them, far from guests, from cages of coins on high, tells them on many liquid cursing nights when the window's frost curlicues the common stars without, the bottles empty, the phonograph plays every last LP, snores grow into crowding, curling cattle, oh he waits, No is important, not in ways he is thinking of now, but he does not wait in vain, no fruit to come—

He told Dylan, "I was a man regarded by other men. I used words like scythe & scalpel. My hands gestured with beauty & power. I spoke of books & news with authority, considered science & spirituality in my remarks. I was one wondered about by others & they knew not how far my path might lead."

lxxiii. / xxxv. / xiii.

Pleasure in presence. Happiness is pleasure in presence. Go slowly, let it open out. Petal at a time, slowly, slow. So many things to keep in mind here. A wish not for control but free groove—a wish to let out with this world as though I sing not create it—slowly, slow.

Fragments. The Bridge of Glass now ascending, an elevator of sorts, no way off still, passing many sites. Maya in someone's dreams, a pink dervish, someone watching her afar, fears she'll begin to guess her own power—Preacher touches Genny's shoulder in the dark & her hotel room bursts into many colors—the next blood canvas Charlie Pigeonfoot saw in that



MP: RS

light bulb that did something to him—his belief that *Remoteland* contained one of his blood canvases but it was from his dreams very befuddling—Christa finds herself in the Ampitheatre more profoundly, walks deeper into, lets to it, lets to it more—Bowie is on his way back to that border town, the one where Rosie lived, the one with the strange lights its priest feared especially when he kneeled late nights in his bed chamber & they entered his room—yes, Bowie knew the priest, things the priest did not tell—who the priest had been long ago & the trunk which preserved those days, locked, hidden, secretly treasured—the priest who in truth hid as priest, from what too much & too disturbing he knew—he knew the Lights very well, had come to this border town long ago because of them—an old colleague of Bowie’s, possible he’d been a mushroom at one time too—fragments, maybe comfort in this—

Crossing flesh through—that’s what they’d called it—that traffick into Dreamland, between dimensions, crossing time easily & angularly & sometimes multiple directions at once—crossing flesh through was the easy way to talk about all this—Bowie had liked it for a long time & had very much objected to the lanes closing to a closely watched few—the priest had left by then, said, “I’ve seen too much for my peaceful passage. It will never end. I need a smaller gig with no cosmic consequences” but he should have believed Bowie’s warning that cosmic dust would always follow his going—now years passed all that, Bowie was on a loud, dirty, crowded bus to the priest’s town—

he thought of Christa, let her being enter his whole being at night on that bus, felt her fill him up with presence, knew leaving her where he had risked losing her not to dangers but to the choices safety allows one to mull—sometimes he saw a room, & a bed, & she was moaning on the bed, her hands bound, her fine ass tapped angrily, multiply, her hair wet tangled with exhaustion, with being taken now again, love in it somewhere—he’d find her again after this if he could—he would have to work to remember her until then—the Lights consumed memories rawest to flesh—the kind he had most of her—

Maya found herself in a room, this isn’t clear, she seemed unhurt & alone, this room had no windows or doors—

Was this dream? Was this some then or another? Would Dylan hear her message & choose to find her?

Fragments is all. I watch them maybe there’s sum, maybe not, I come back to the room, the important room, walls of fire, ceiling of stars, floor of moonlight, couch of silver melody, bed of blue light & red gold—

lxxiv. / xxxvi. / xiv.

What’s true is coming trouble, arcing through the hours, awaiting arrival, the smash soon to know, what’s true is constant ferment. The world is pounding everywhere, chaotically, one color changing another, a fluid dissipating, metal cracking wood, one panic not enough, another too much, truths click out with a passing beat, swinging spectre of rage & light & now gone, here another, & another. Truths high & solid & good, everywhere collapsing, our friend No would try to tell his sodden friends to wake up, keep jerking about wildly to keep off the rest, & one would mumble in a half-coherent blubber, “Didn’t you used to be almost famous once?” someone else would snort & say “Can I almost have your autograph?” & whoever wasn’t passed out would blearily howl.

What’s true happens always, gives way only to itself, spitting yeas & denials equally in

bitter, golden abundance.

More fragments. The No-Tell exists oddly as a multi-star hotel & as a poorfolks social project. The ones employed there, living & eating there, are given strict rules on how to interact with the guests. Essentially: No-Tell.

What happens later, gives No his satisfaction & punishes quite a few indiscriminately, happens near the top floor in a bed paid for by no public document or figure.

She came to pose for pictures, told her girlfriends to call her cell phone in three hours if she hadn't called, they were runaways new to the No-Tell staff, assigned as maids, never should have been hired, not poor, fucking cell phones!

—laid her out beautifully in an unhooked powder blue bra & panties gently pulled down to her knees—

—lights burst her mind in ways she knew no words, on her back now, breast squeezed by her own hands, breathing quickly—

—naked—& then—

now a shred by she growled no to it—now so many lights there was no telling concrete reality—

now resting again, legs askew, her freshly shaved pussy lips when—

phone rang & something like her rejoined her girlfriends, giggling—gives way to itself—happy, golden abundance

lxxv. / xxxvii. / xv.

Some keening croon for a god, kneel for it, raise high for it, suck smoke & eat molecules for it, refrain touch or gobble many for it, keening croon for a god, maybe two ideas of what it is, this god, a mountain of good, a cosmic redwood of power, its vast soil of right, a spearing heart shine of true, more than three ideas hard to triangulate simply, the god must be story, kiss, a powerful leg, this or another thing it must be, a pretty cloud, a wet cavernous pussy with light small pink crown, a library of capitalized words, a sure verb without adornment, an intent mysterious but possible all may go but all won't go, a secret, oh great secret, why pain, why age, why flesh, why want, why sad, why sad, why departure, why fist, why sad, maybe why joy but often less so. Why suffer, what reward, which explain. Oh, so.

—keening croon for a god, a science, a sweet faith's sting true. For pain is true, it is first memory, it is departure. Pain is solid & trustworthy. Pain is not good but pain—

Why ferment, why breath, why dream.

The wisest book warns, "Some eat others" & shuts hard, what is this book & source its wisdom, is it crooning's best fruits, is it fair healing to wounds? Some eat others & how bear this truth, wake up, Rebecca!

She looks up at me, I'm still not there. She tries to swat Cosmic Early away like he was a housefly.

You can't. I told you. "What do you want me to do? Where's Raymond?" He's moving my pen in your mind. By request. I'm not forcing him nor am I hurting you, am I? "No. Just tell me

what to do.” You don’t work like that. You obey nobody. You’ve been reading my books for years now. Shouldn’t I know you as well as you know me? “I didn’t know you could do this.” It’s a little more drastic than most could handle. They stick with the books. I don’t think you need to. “I know. You said that. Is there more to this?” There’s always more. “Are you going to tell me?” No. No-tell. No-tell!

Cosmic Early breaks into great wild laughing. It makes no sense to Rebecca who doesn’t know quite yet.

He’d waited for a long time, still a man of blood & bone. Waited for what might still come, like letters from a lost, fond year. Waited hoping for more than just the old wants, bitter rifts, still tangled smolders.

Why ferment. Why breath. Why dream.

—for a great, swinging spectre blowing out rage & light, maybe one whose path he’d hurl his sick body onto, along, not yet Dreamland, not yet what he could not know for certain.

Cosmic Early was now living at the No-Tell, it was obvious to him that here was some crossing to the White Woods, maybe some hint to the Bridge of Glass. The way is Dis-illusion.

He could not tell Rebecca yet because he did not know. Too much scatter in the conduit he used. Dreams once coherent to him, a kaleidoscopic oracle but oracle nonetheless

everything would cross, would mimic, would double, he groaned in his bed, the girl next to him groaned in concert, a trace of spittle on her shiny pink lips, or was it come. Might be blood but not today. He’d paid good money for her, for the path she walked to & from him without a word or glance from others. Her friends would come too, in time. Haha. Come too. No-Tell. Shit, this world was funny. So fucking funny.

She wasn’t really asleep & her name was Jazz. Early pain had accelerated her natural brilliance. Cosmic Early was her teacher of sorts, she had sought him, sought this place. They each regarded the other as a last chance.

She’d brought her friends unwillingly, decided they would make good cover & protection for awhile, then when bored, scared, or homesick enough they’d take their sad, hurried leave. Would forget her & this place enough to be unable to speak inconveniently true about either. She was patient.

Cosmic Early partly understood her, the part she let him understand. He was brilliant too, but old, past when age helped, when the body’s complaints slowed the mind, obscured its sharpness. Not long ago, he would have known her in a lazy glance.

As it was, he’d let it get to him, the *it* that had begun to take in other ways, the warnings meant nothing, even those from his friend Gravy, once his partner in another place. Gravy was blunt.

"You still taking that underage whore regular?" Early said nothing. "She's trouble, Cosmos. She's not here by chance." Early nodded but he didn't really know. Gravy saw that, saw the sickness in his old friend, knew hints of the rivalry with Benny Big Dreams. His face, a beat-up patched old monster, softened. "Are you even screwing her?" "Here or there?" There meant Dreamland. "Do you have enough flesh here?" Gravy left the bar when Cosmic Early would say no more.

Jazz was clearer on her purpose with him. Though he asked little of her, yet, in the waking hours they shared, she would have done almost anything. It was Dreamland where it mattered, where she wanted him to bring her more often. She'd figured a way back into the White Woods, where she had to return, where she would finish what remained undone. She knew he was afraid, & had reason to be.

He knew she had friends he needed somehow, all three. They never saw each other, Jazz & Early, by daylight or evening lamplight. They never saw each other clothed. They didn't know what their bodies did while they were in Dreamland. Each intended to consume the other, not yet knowing how. Apart, neither thought much of the other. He paid good money for her path to him to be clear. She didn't know. He'd let it get to him & was failing day by day.

"Next time, bring them both."

Some eat others. No science, no faith. What heart's newgrown starlight from begging world for its king? A system, a star, a shining tome of crystal lyric. Some eat others. No science, no faith. Try to hustle beyond this for a flashier believe, the goods of tall shapely buildings, the goods of crown upon one man's head then another through the centuries, where I fit in, where the action goes only my dust will one day watch.

Some eat others. Bowie sees this as a graffito knife-carved into the seat back facing him. He nods, then shakes his head. True, but not enough.

He'd asked Paul, last night talking in the park, "What about the fire?" "What fire?" "How many times have you told us this story?" "A few." "*Quite a few*. I don't think 'few' can handle how many times. You say there was a fire but the story contains no fire." "Yah, it does." "Where? You fell asleep in a dust storm, woke up, Rosie was gone. The whole town looked for her then gave up. Paula came slinking around, you took up with her. We don't get details; you don't remember, you don't want to tell." "Yah." "So—what fire?" "It happened, later, but that night." "What does that mean?" "Hey, Lee, back off him. He lost his wife. He's living in a shelter." "I just want to know."

Paul looked me up & down a good long time. "It was because of Paula. Remember her books on alternate history?" "Yah." "Well, we tried something in those books. It didn't work." "Tried what?" "Going back." "How?" "We went back & there was a fire & we thought Rosie died & we didn't try again." "Are you shitting us?" Silence. More silence. "No. I'm not. We tried. Paula did all she could. She loved Rosie like me but we just couldn't." Paul stood, shaky, the other guys urging him to relax, sit back down. He was looking at me. "You'll hit that moment too, maybe. That go-back moment, try to fix it moment. Maybe you'll have better luck than we

did.” I stood too. I was scared, not sure why, but I had to go. We looked at each other. He put a hand on my shoulder could have broke the bones. “Some eat others. That’s what I learned. That’s part of what you need to know where you’re going.”

On a bus to your old town I see it again. I could have carved it on that seat back myself but I don’t know.

He told us about Paula one time, we were all fiercely drunk. Not sure why it happened, that much, I think it was July 4th fireworks & we had more booze than possible, maybe whiskey, maybe I brought it, & I’m not sure it was Paula he was talking about but it’s what else I have to go on. Til I get there & find her.

It comes back in thumps, “the Lights were everywhere that night, they’d never been like that, not far away but all around us” “I think she brought them, I really do, she had to prove it to me, the power she believed” “the window near the church’s spire, she’d removed it, it was a square hole she was leaning out naked, it was fucking scary, she wanted it deep in her ass which I’d never done & we’d never really done it” “the Lights changed” “She showed me how to do it, how to squeeze her tits & shove my cock in deep like some kind of machine & when I got it right she laughed. She laughed & laughed into the town’s night air & she leaned out the window farther & farther” “The Padre was passed out in a pew, his trousers at his feet” “Someone mentioned Rosie to me that night, in front of Paula, shit I didn’t like that!” “People were talking about a dream many of them had” “I felt myself pushing deeper & deeper into her, felt my cock harden like it never had, I lost some kind of awareness & became my cock seeing how it saw, the way it cracked her cherry ass, how it let my cock push deeper & deeper, how it was union breath & beat with her, my hands squeezing her tits which almost chewed my fingers in their hunger, her mouth red & moaning words in the wrong order” “I was so young. This was so long ago”

He said that last in the middle & I tried to swim to coherency, I looked at the others but they missed it, a couple were feeling themselves up. So what was it then? He wasn’t old. It made no sense. He wasn’t an old man! I was lost & he had stopped talking. What did it mean? Was it just that he lived the wound like last year? He never said her name but it sounded like that town. The fireworks were filling the skies, like Paul’s Lights, like the night he fucked Paula hanging out the high church window if he did.

“Hey, man, this seat taken?”

“No.”

“You OK? You look sick. I got a bottle of water. Not even opened. I have three really. I meant do you want one? I got extra.”

“Thanks.”

“Where you going?”

“New Mexico.”

“Yah. The light, I know.”

“Lights?”

“Light. The sunsets. They’re beautiful.”

“You didn’t say lights?”

“No. Drink more of that. You look pale. I got a good feel for people & their conditions. A gift.”

“Thanks.” “No problem, really. I’m studying to be a healer, to tell you the truth.”

Bowie nods. The water calms him but then he feels like he’s falling away.

What was he remembering? Had Paul told him any of that? Hadn't he been dreaming about those days for years now, talking to Paul long after he knew him?

"Dreams are potent, man. Sometimes like a doctor, trying to tell you what's wrong. Sometimes like a door, telling you to come on, take a dare, open me up."

Bowie opens his eyes but the bus is dark & the person next to him is shadows.

"It's OK. Sometimes I hear thoughts. Can be a problem when not careful. But you look hip, man, that's why I sat here. Looked like you could use a friend too."

Bowie nods. Settles back. "We can talk but back a step away. Please."

"OK, man. I can do that. Hey, it's just like you said, too. I picture myself backing up til I can hear your voice but not your mind. You're sharp, man."

"Yah."

"Can I help? I mean, you got a lot on your mind, I could tell before I backed up. Some pretty girls in there. You must call 'em with a magic scent."

Bowie says nothing.

"Just kidding."

"Some eat others."

"I know. I learned that one too."

"What does it mean?"

lxxvi. / xxxviii. / xvi.

Tonight someone suffers. Genny watches all of it coming out of her motel TV, she's nude holding Tweety Bird who's nude too, all the colors are terrifying, someone suffers tonight, she watches & touches her skin to make sure she's still there, someone tonight suffers, he'd been with her, he'd touched her shoulder & she'd screamed into her mattress, a long long time, it felt relieving to finally let it all go, crazily, wildly, let it go, & when she'd looked up, calm a moment, she'd put on the TV for comfort & company, they'd both undressed, for a laugh & the colors hadn't been there at first, no, at first had been a TV show she thinks she watched once, it became colors slowly, not even noticeable at first, around the edges of the screen & then she couldn't turn it off, & then she couldn't move, he'd touched her, he'd been there, in that room far from everything, been there & touched her shoulder, "tonight someone suffers" Who'd said that? Him? Anyone? The TV?

What then. I'm here, Preacher, I'm nude, ready. I'd give myself to you in body, tonight, if you want, if you'd have me. I don't know if you would tonight, or if I should have back then. I don't know. What I mostly do is remember & this is really the worst. I remember *then* & don't seem to have a *now*. Have I left that bar where I was waiting for you? I mean, *really left it*? I can't be sure.

If the colors from that TV became your body, or just your desire for me, is it what I want, is there a me that is not my wants?

It's what I can't tell, Preacher. You would get angry sometimes, in your speeches, angry enough to raise noise in those listening, it's why we were there, wasn't it? A plalanx of pretty young women to ring protectively, erotically around you & your words. Nothing amplifies better than plenty of pussy on hand. Eh, Preacher? We agreed, we knew. There had to be more to it than that, of course, but, still, also, we knew.

“What difference between the carriage’s angry push & several muddled blouses?” You’d start & look at nobody. “What difference between old men easily debating war & the bombs made for market noons?” You’d go on, but slowly. Then, always picking out an older man, a rival? A brother? A boast you to him behind your fine phalanx of pussy, you’d slowly continue, “If a beggar looks close at you, is this sacred or shameful new space?”

You’d pause. Hell, you’d stop. People would shift around. Waiting. The phalanx wouldn’t move though. We were the signal to stay. Preacher is biding his moment. Bide with him.

“Talk of love, talk of empathy, rant on the burning blankness through this world’s old heart.” You’d be shouting now, sometimes it was incoherent. Nearly. Near as you chose. “Confess indifference, cry ignorance, keen to being less than a stripling in first night’s squall.” You’d stop. By now the crowd was so wetly riled you were fucking it at will. “Eat the new pill & care for a shining hour or two.” You’d start laughing, it always upset me. Your laugh was a deep hollow bowl, I’d go looking down in it for humor or even meaning & I’d find nothing.

“Some . . . other . . . night in giving arms & the world a fine sweet to be enjoyed slowly. Past . . . dawn . . . believe something salves the closest wounds.” You’d stop right there, & I would believe, *every damn time*, that you weren’t going to go on. My knickers were sodden by now, not sure about the rest of the phalanx, & I wonder now just what was it I wanted to fuck?

But you’d go on, you’d finish it. “Changed for every change, every broken new high, every bed, why unloved alone.” Now you’d scoop up every last glance, accept them as due about now.

“Tonight someone suffers. *Must . . . a sage . . . exhume . . . to say . . . you suffer too?*” You’d leave there, usually, not much else to say, we’d hang back a bit to make sure the crowd didn’t raise too much post-preachings hell. Usually they felt doused by guilt & confusion. I never knew how much good it did. I mean, I’d heard the words & their like many times, I knew the territory. Your aim, I figured, was to arouse & shock. A catalyst. Using your own carved out philosophy where another would use scripture. I never knew what you’d read, though I’d always assumed a lot, or what you valued in books, a harder guess. Probably a bit of Buddhism, maybe some Camus. Rumi? Rilke? The world’s great mystics resemble each other by invisible ways.

Anyway, back to me, nude on my bed. More than a few times with the Phalanx too. How the menfolk would have creamed & paid to see us frolic! There were some sweet hours. We kept busy, we had fun.

We were waiting for *you*. Every one of us. It was usually why the ones who left did. It’s why I didn’t. I outlasted every one of them & I thought you knew, & knew why.

Even now I can’t stop the want or the pain. I’m a thousand miles from you, but you’re here. *Right here*. Those colors coming out of my motel TV set.

Nothing goes away, Preacher, & nothing returns. That’s what I’ve learned from all these years.

We just wanted you to choose. One, none, all if you wanted. You seemed to understand so much, care so much, it’s why we were there. But you missed it. Missed us.

Thing is, I was never quite sure about this. I stayed longer. I heard how the preachings changed over time. You knew something, you knew a lot of things, you weren’t *blind*, of that I

became sure.

But I didn't ask. I nursed my want, my doubts, my questions, but I never asked. Respect? Fear. Then that night I was ready to ask. I was ready.

lxxvii. / xxxix. / xvii.

Eventually back to the big man on stage, his guitar, his voice, his band. Always relevant, however the pages pass.

Nothing less in it, watch him, watch his band. The music its own—beautiful yaw—

“What's he talking about?”

“Trying to understand it, like always.”

“Understand music? With his pen?”

“Yah. Music, & desire.”

They laugh. I laugh with them.

Mapless street corners. Dusky old light. Secret juice from other years, & still it spills.

They play because they like it, because they want to, because Noisy Children fucking rocks & not much else to the tale.

I watch, obscurely, sitting with Rebecca, more open. She expects the best. I wake, find all's blooming despite. Nod.

Outside the traffic lights & branches wave, night taps, taps again, dreamed this hour

Skulls of shacks

Charred autos

Desert light spiking corpses

A game, a puzzle, a flu. Something
to be found, to be won, I don't
know. I don't know? No. Don't.

“I'm in the Labyrinthine too”

“Everyone.”

“I've tried to breach it.”

The band keeps playing.

What coming hour dreams now,
rosy light & bodies fallen, gentle
words, gentle death. Something
won't let go.

“Still music?”

“Yep.”

“Still pussy. Er, desire?”

“Yah. Er.”

Maya looks around again. Shapes in the dark partly return the world. No windows, no

doors, but a bare rosy light from somewhere.

Dressed, barely. Silence.

Before, after, when?

You, tell me.

I don't know.

You make these pages.

Sometimes that doesn't help.

Tell me!

Many think you're the key.

What do you think?

I think you're fuckable fiction which seems to be what I like sometimes.

What then?

No more. Just that. The world's a consuming flesh.

Why all this then?

Because words comfort. The chaos told in ink. A story obscures the great raging panic life comprises.

All that?

Or just this. Music consumes everything, even death.

Want some now?

Light now from an open doorway.

She stands, more dressed.

"Still time," she says aloud, to nothing.

A hotel hallway, timeless dim, patterns in the carpet & on the wall signifying something, everything, & nothing

She'd find Dylan here somewhere, if she still wanted to. Or was it better chasing?

lxxviii. / xl. / xviii.

Eventually some idea toward this hotel, its seeming to consume more within itself, where it breaks & borders other,

a continuity, a blurring, dulling distinction between within & without—

Where the No-Tel has not breached is Luna T's Cafe, & something vital in this. Not an antagonism between the two, not yet.

Where Luna T's opened out to else & other, the No-Tel pulled, compelled *toward*.

How high each, how deep? How indeed. I don't know in truth, have not ever known with T's & this No-Tel seems more monstrous to me than aught—

What say, why say. A puzzle with solution? An exit? I don't think so.

Answers seem to reduce, exclude. Exits are capitulation, if not straight out false. No escape through alchemy, emotion, intuition, scientific illumination.

What then?

Ancients said mathematics & music. Others sacrifice & mercy.

Maybe it was just blind hunger, code & key to every moment, hunger to feed, hunger to possess, hunger to make & re-make, hunger resembling a flame, an eye, an ear, a hand.

Hungers twined & named together as God. What feeds, what must be fed, desire & emptiness, longing, wonder, a clash, a spark, what explains.

There is no explain in embodiment, no why, no whereto. None. If a difference, Luna T's toward an open hand, a willing question. The No-Tel willing order. Perhaps this is overstating, flow is truer than truth—

A warning. A thousand words if necessary but in sum, a warning.

A breath. Turn another way. Tonight someone suffers. Whatever night, someone suffers. No water, empty bowl, two pillows for one head.

The No-Tell rises far above Luna T's Cafe & the parking garage above her. An odd building, not a steady look, an ill shifting from angle to angle, hour to hour.

War where once a city, now the markets burn, neighbors blankly clutch for what remains.

On the TV, a sack of cold coins, a palsied try reading wise leaves.

The crack of want into uneven pieces, a hand over a mouth, another loosens a tight garment. A king bides & bides the rabble's growl, contrives new ways to turn lingual prowess to iron.

Someone suffers, though blood & breath skein all close, a weaving each to all.

Some night fireworks fly about the No-Tell's peak, its shifting ambiguous peak, often thrust hard into black clouds, fireworks light up the clouds,

whatever little you were ended with a turn & a reach, then you belonged to a new moment, more than manacles & compulsion to obey, you were taken from one kind of knowing to another

Someone suffers. Turn away & there another, turn again, & another. No explain in embodiment, in hands slow & fingers linger slower, in what will be given, in how a God's woman will secretly come in prayers buried inside dreams nobody hears.

Maybe it was just blind hunger, code & key to every movement, Jazz cries out & wakes alone. Felt waking cloak & tangle her anew. She'd been of one world, then another, now here was neither, here was aftermath. She twisted around, trying to feel her youth, it was faint music, what she felt most was anger, where she accelerated in thought & imagination was deep in her fury. A keening croon made in her loins, cried from her belly, exploded from her mind, the one she didn't use to have, the one she has now.

Some far place, some bridge of colored glass, some elixir's glowing eye gazing from deep her throat. A wide open eye in love, she would find him, she would mount him, she would crush

him, this would be the next world, what her book called a far place of kind solitude, of clear shine.

Mathematics & music. Sacrifice & mercy.

A book cries for its perpetua, for something like immortality. Comes in glints, in long breaths. I agree to its unknown length, unknown age. I agree because I have no counter-argument. I love this book, its body, its path.

Its crooning corrodes.



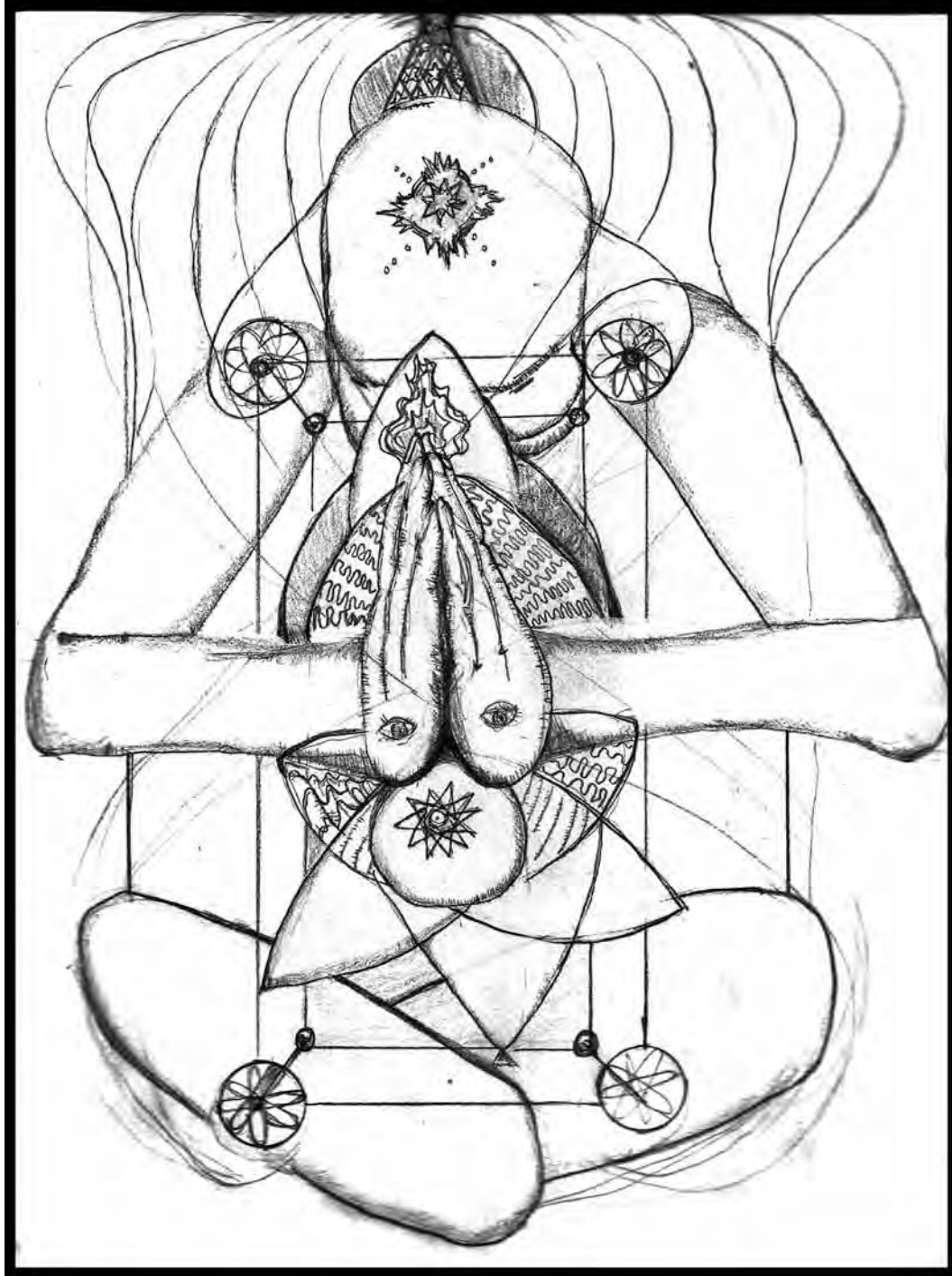
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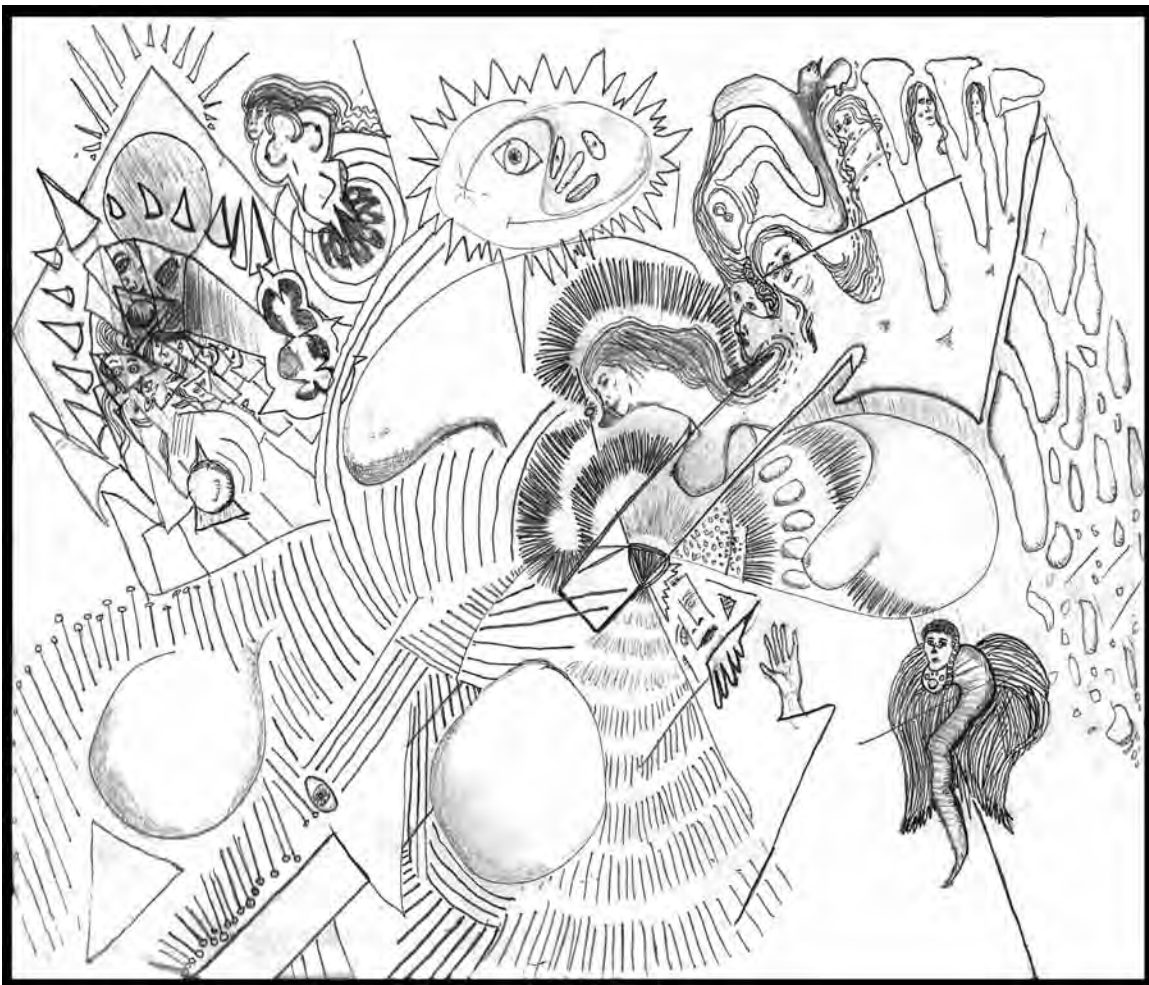


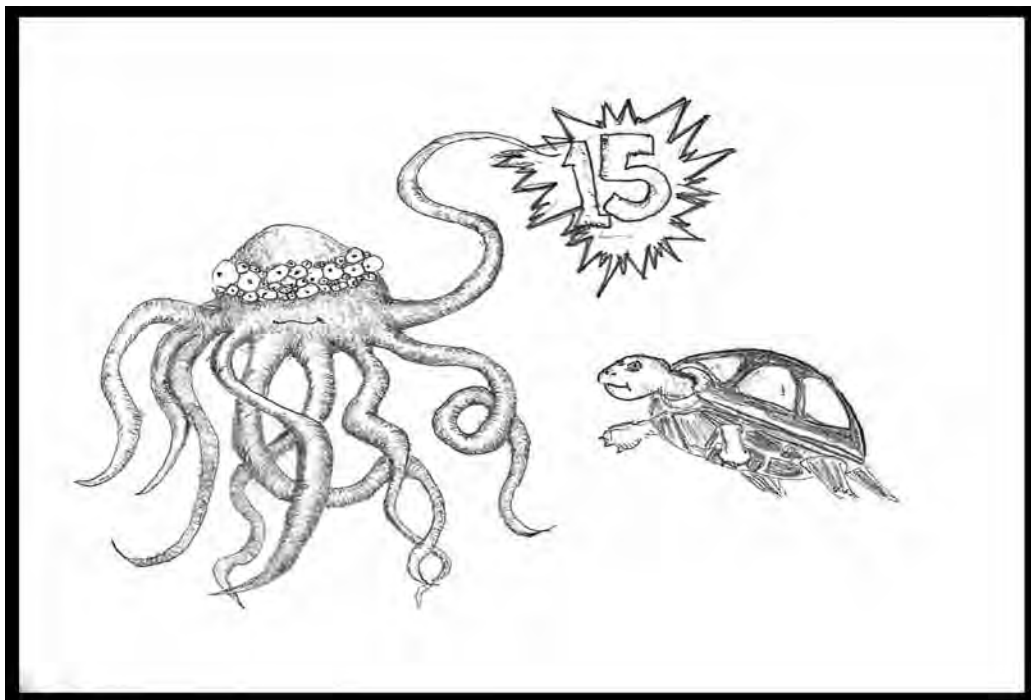
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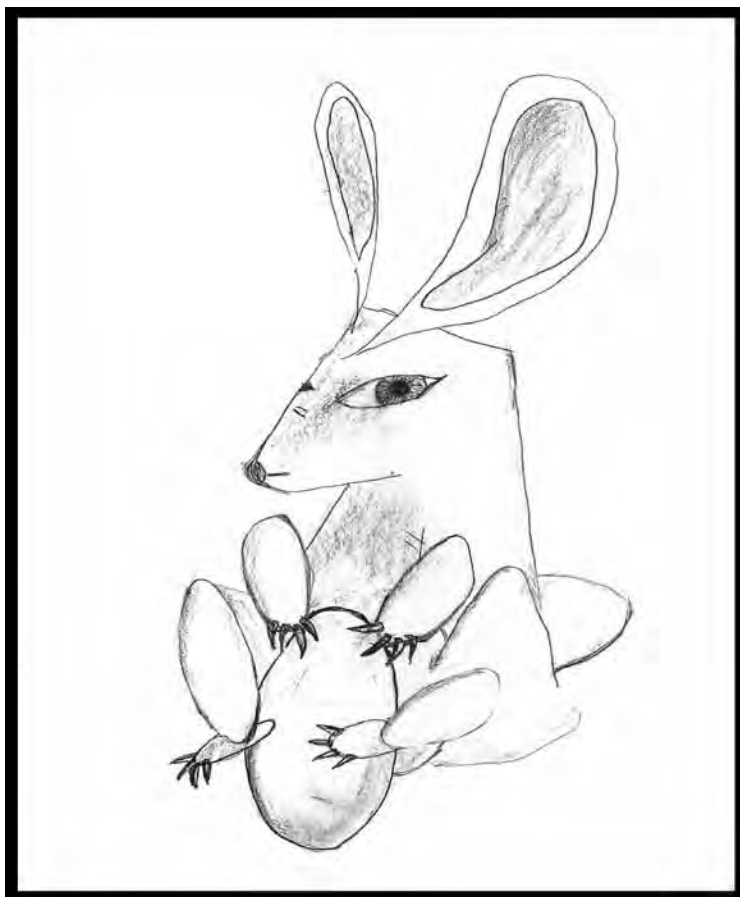
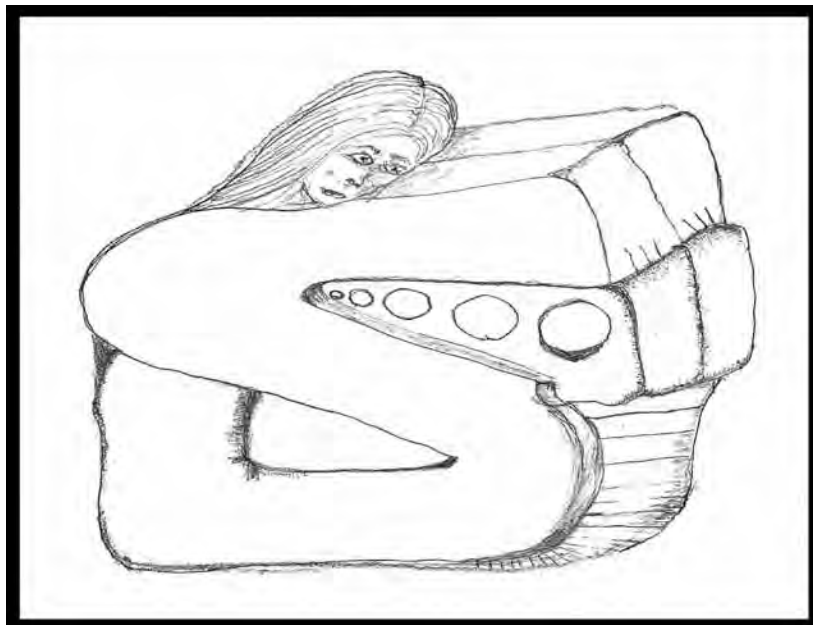


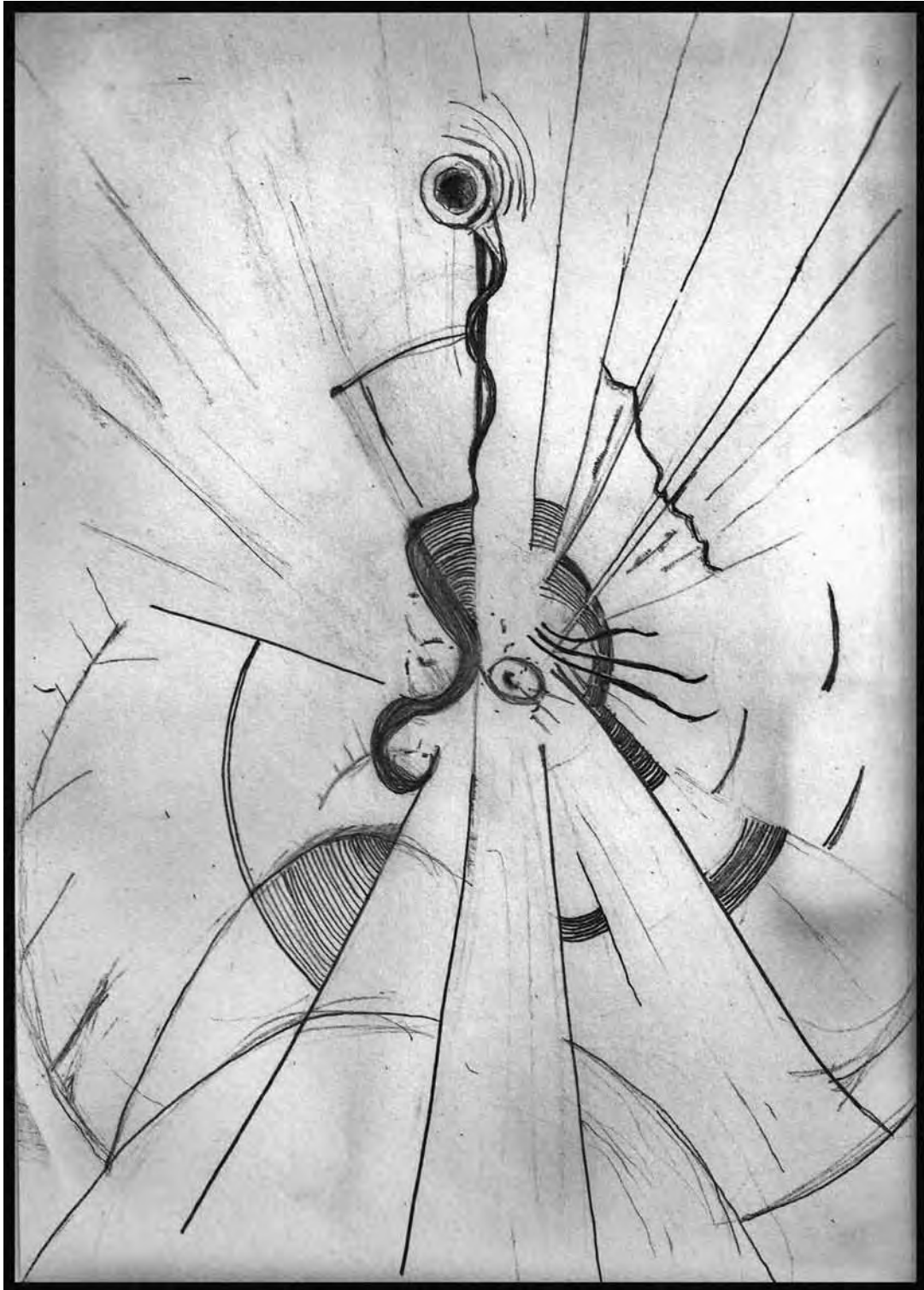
Catfishrivers

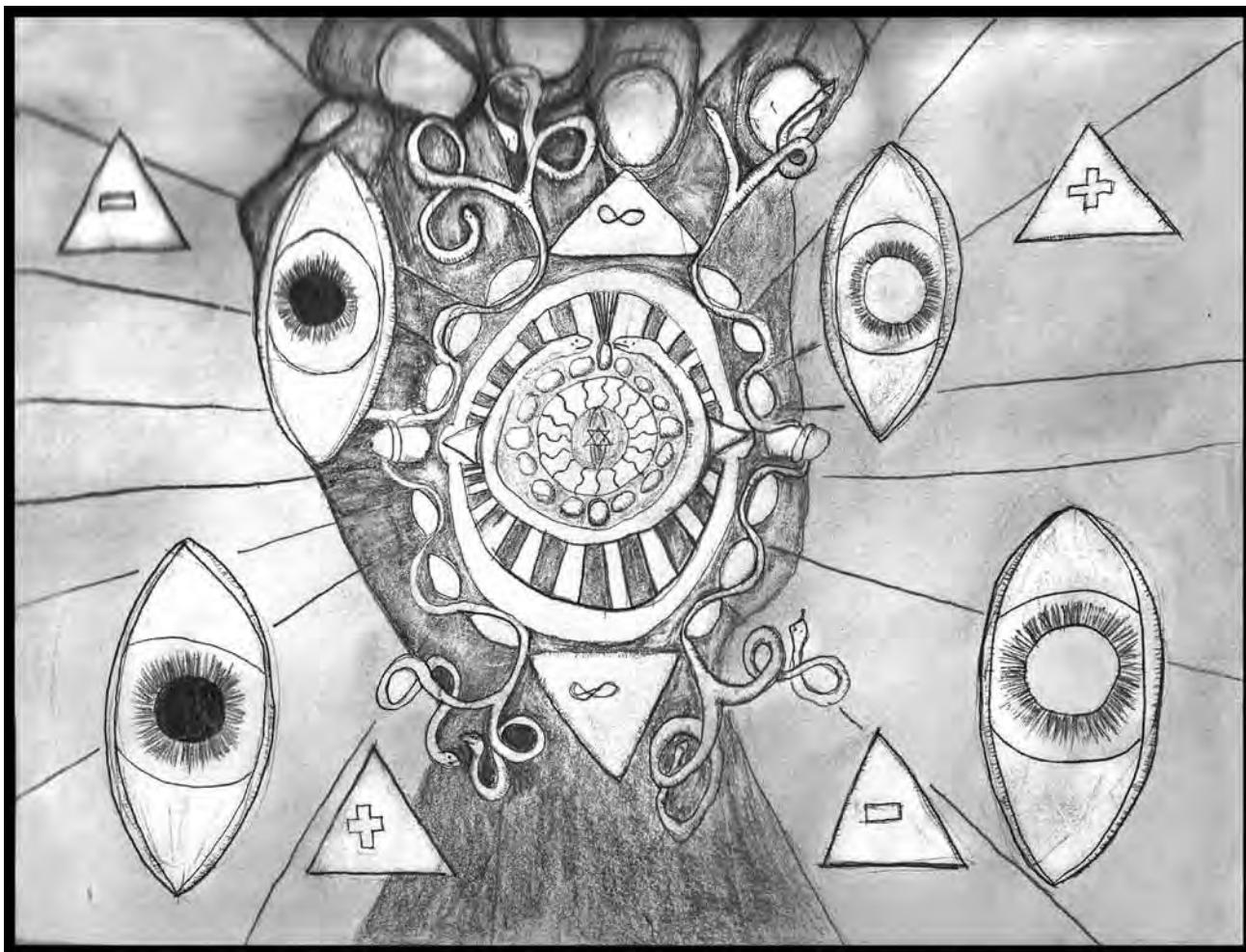














Joe Ciccone



Dance Hall Orphans

Not when hanging onto the running board of four-cylinder fords,
or when painting in bright colors in the middle of the night,
or when creeping with broken bones beneath low hung eaves
pitched against the winter dome, but now, all at once,
that he realizes his best years are now gone.

There were days of reflection, and others days,
more ragged and with frayed ends—
when he took photographs of wallflower women,
whose pale hands held bouquets of their own flowers;
days when the fires rose around them and she said “stand and deliver,”
while he thought about the Savior.

They made a record once, when he was twenty-four,
But he aint’ twenty-four anymore.
He is me, and she is you, caught in a moment of revelation,
and these things of which we sing constitute us, the proud nomads,
endless hoppers, laying down on the salty rails,
like godfathers of the railroad.

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Ralph H. Emerson



J Is for Jumping Jack

[Essay]

The letter J has three quite unrelated uses. In vocabulary words, J is a signal of ‘up-and-down motion’, as in *jiggle* and *jump*. This reflects the letter’s physical prototype, the Jaw, which moves up and down as we talk and eat: *jabbering*, *joshing*, and “*jawing*” away. Since this ‘up-and-down’ connotation holds true in many far-flung languages, it seems to be the letter’s natural job, or at least the natural job of the “juh” sound that we happen to give J in modern English.

J has not always had that sound. It used to be pronounced like *y* in *yes*, which greatly influenced the development of its other meanings. First is ‘joyousness,’ as in *joke*, *jovial*, *jump for joy*. And second is that J is our key letter for names. So many boys and girls were named for Christian saints sporting that little letter—especially *John*, *James*, and *Joseph*—that J names rhetorically came to mean ‘average’, as in *Jane* Doe and *Joe* Schmo. In fiction such names often suggest *heroic* averageness: *Jane* Eyre, *James* Bond. Not many villains have J names. It’s a pretty positive letter—except where jaws are concerned. *Jaws* was a shark movie, *Jaws* was a James Bond villain, and Lewis Carroll chose a J name for his toothiest villain: “Beware the *Jabberwock*, my son! The *jaws* that bite, the claws that catch!”

Jump

First, a comparison.

The sound most similar to *j* is *ch* as in *chew*. (Listen: *juju*, *choo-choo*.) They’re both mouthy sounds, and they overlap a little in meaning. To *jabber* is to talk fast; so’s *chattering*. If you’re cold, your teeth *chatter*. Shaking from fear, you’re *jittery* with the *jim-jams*. Shaking from age, you’re *joddering* or *juddering*. Busy jaws are the image here. Our teeth are *choppers* chopping away; *jabjab* is ‘chopping up’ in Australian Gooniyandi. We eat by stuffing our *cheeks* and *chewing*. Talking is *chin music*. Such words flow into each other. *Chin* is cousin to Norwegian *kinn* ‘cheek’, *cheek* once meant ‘jaw’, and *jaw* is from French *joue* ‘cheek’. *Chin*, *chew*, *chomp*, *chips*, *chocolate*, *chomp*, *chow*, *chortle*, *chugalug*, *Cheerios*, *Cheetos*, *Chiclets*.

The difference between *ch*’s mouth imagery and J’s is that *ch* words only seem to be able to name literally mouthy things like *chewing*, while J words are capable of soaring aloft into other realms. So while J makes *jaw* and *jabber*, it also names other bouncy things like *jumps*, *juggles*, *jounces*, *jumbles*, *jigs*, *jitterbugs*—and *jazz*, which was originally slang for sex. All kinds of J things bob up and down: *joggers*, *jelly*, *jigsaws*, car *jacks*, burglars’ *jimmies*, *jack-in-the-boxes*, girls’ jiggling *jugs*. Many languages use J verbs for bouncing. Gooniyandi *jarr* is to stamp your feet, and *jawoowoorr* is to jump into the water. Indonesian *jengkolet* is to *tumble* into the water, *jingkik* is to hop along (a *jengkerik* is a cricket), *jingkrak* is to jump up and down, and

jengkek is literally to jump for joy—just like *jakuyaku* in Japanese.

While J motions must be quick—must go in a *jiffy*—they need not only be up-and-down. They can also quickly go up or out, as in *jab*, *jut*, a *jet* of water. Or be the impact from such juttings: *jar*, *jostle*, *jerk*, *jolt*, *jam*. Sometimes they are side-to-side movements: Indonesian *jongkat-jangkik* is to wobble, Gooniyandi *jinjin* is to shake a tree. They can be noisy too, especially in bell words like *jingle* and *jangle*. Native Japanese for a bell's jangling is *jan-jan*, and Chinese for bell (*zhong*) is pronounced “joong.”

If you look up the history of the various jumpy English words above, it usually says “etymology unknown.” “Juh” is a medium-rare round in the world's languages. It's entirely absent from the Germanic tongues that English came from, so our jumpy words didn't come from there. Our “juh” sound came from Norman French, but French didn't give us many jumpies either, because it never had many of its own. Our jumpies mostly arose within English itself, bubbling up from our collective unconscious with appropriate meanings as soon as we had a “juh” sound to work with.

The most obscure English dialects often have perfect J words known nowhere else. Leafing through Wright's *English Dialect Dictionary*, I find half a dozen old regional equivalents of *jolt*, including *jarg*, *jass*, *jet*, *jot*, *judd*, *jollock*, *juff*, and *jow*. All of those loosely meant ‘shove or jostle’. That last word *jow* is especially interesting, since it's really nothing but a J with a vowel tacked on to make it pronounceable; and its definitions obediently cycle through each J specialty: “talk loud,” “knock, strike,” “a jolt; a jog,” “rock, roll,” “move forward in a . . . rocking way,” and “ring or toll a bell.”

Joy

“Merry bells” also ring in “L'Allegro,” John Milton's poem about joy. A few lines later, he's watching youths and maids dancing to “*jocund*” fiddles in “chequered shade” as he waits for his Muse: “Haste thee, Nymph, and bring with thee / *Jest*, and youthful *Jollity*.” Milton chose sounds carefully to set the moods in his poems, and he knew that J words were as lively as ringing bells and breathless dancers. The “*jocund*” fiddles were no accident, either. That word is from *jocus*, Latin for *joke*, and thus an etymological cousin to many other playful words, including *jocular*, *jocose*, the French word *jeu* ‘game’, and even those little game-pieces called *jewels* and *jewelry*. So while *jocular* is no relation to *joy* (from Latin *gaudium*), or to *jolly*, *jovial*, *jubilant*, it's certainly on the same team.

Same with jesting. The J's in *jocular* and *joke* helped attract unrelated words like *jest*, *josh*, *high jinks* ‘mischief’, and their buddies *jape* ‘practical joke’, *gibe*, and *jeer*. Such words often cluster together: “the *jest*s and *jeer*s of others,” “continuing to *joke*, *jape*, or *jest* at the expense of others.” Most European tongues share a few of them with us—Spanish *jocoso*, Dutch *jolig*, and so on—and we also find counterparts beyond Europe. Japanese borrowed *jōku* from us, but it already had the native word *jōdan* for joke, as well as *jara-jara* for ‘playful’ and the verbs *jareru*, *jarasu* for ‘play’.

I'm cheating here. The letter J in Japanese and other non-Western tongues has more or less the same “juh” sound as in English, but the local J in most European languages *never* sounds like ours, even in familiar-looking words. French *joconde* is “zhocond,” Spanish *jocoso* is “hocoso,” and the jolly Dutch *jolig* is “yolik.” In contrast to our *jump* and *jiggle*, which get their ‘up-and-down’ meanings directly from their “juh” sounds, the “J-ness” of international

mood words like *jolly* and *jocular* rests almost entirely in the *written* letter, not in any particular sound, because the J takes on different sounds as it crosses national borders.

J's earliest sound, its original sound in Latin, which is still used in Dutch and German, is *y*. There's a relic of this in the word *hallelujah*, where the Latin letters *j-a-h* are pronounced "yah," exactly like the Dutch and German *ja ja ja* for *yes*, or indeed like *Yah* in *Yahweh*, the Hebrew name for God Almighty. *Hallelujah* is Hebrew for 'praise the Lord', so the early Roman Christians, who pronounced J as *y*, naturally spelled it *-jah*. Did you catch that? Because chances are that you or someone you love has a J in their name for exactly the same reason.

Jack and Jill

In these articles we often note the sexes of certain initials: T and L as in *Tom* and *Lily*, M as in *Mary*, and now J as in *John*. The M and J traditions are part of our Christian heritage. Historically, all female M names recall the Virgin *Mary*, and J names recall *Jesus*. But since *Jesus* seemed too sacred to bandy about as a boys' name, custom seized instead on *John*, from his associates John the Baptist, the Apostle, and the Evangelist. After the Crusades, says the *Oxford Dictionary of English Christian Names*, Europeans made *John* a "favourite" name in all its local forms: "French *Jean*, German *Hans* (from *Johannes*), Italian *Giovanni*, Spanish *Juan*, Russian *Ivan*." How popular was it? Here are some statistics. For two and a half centuries after 1550, the tally of English boys baptized *John* never dipped below 15 percent. In the decades before 1700, it peaked at an astonishing 28 percent! As late as 1930, it was still the most popular boys' name in America; and it's also the source of *Jones* and *Johnson*, the two commonest surnames after *Smith*.

Besides being a euphemism for *Jesus*, what does *John* have to do with Yahweh? Well, it is one of many names in which the God-drunk Hebrews used the godly syllable *Yah*. In its Hebrew form, *John* means God-Is-Gracious, or *Yohanan*. When Roman Christians used the name, they wrote it with J, like *hallelujah*, so the Hebrew *Yohanan* became Latin *Johannes*. As Latin disappeared, each new language evolved its own way of saying the J, giving us our modern bouquet of sounds in *John* and *Juan* and *Jean*. Several names have parallel stories: God-Shall-Add-a-Son was *Yosef*, later *Joseph*, and God-Is-Salvation was *Yeshua*, Latinized in Rome as *Jesus*.

These J names easily crossed the gender line from male to female, far more so than M names going the other way. Male *Matthews* and *Michaels* abound, and a few Catholic-born European men like Rainer *Maria* Rilke have always been named for the Virgin—but they were never remotely as common as female *Marias*. Yet *John* feminizes very easily. Its female forms in English are *Jane*, *Joan*, *Jean* and *Jeannie*, *Janice*, *Janet*. Other tongues have *Johanna*, *Juanita*, *Ivana*, *Jana*, *Jeanne*. These have always been exceedingly popular. In Paris around 1300, says the dictionary above, *Jehan* (*John*) was "at least twice as frequent" as the next name *William*, ho-hum—but it really is shocking that *Jehane* (*Jane*) was twice as common as *Marie*!

Then as now, *John* and *Mary* shared the stage with *John* and *Jane* and many other two-J couples: *Jim* and *Judy* in *Rebel without a Cause*, "Joe & Jane Sixpack," "the average Joe and Jill," and *Jack* and *Jill* in the nursery rhyme. The last two names were so common they turned into vocabulary words. *Jill* or *Gillian* (Latin *Juliana*) was used as slang for 'girl' from Shakespeare to *Three Jills in a Jeep*. We took *Jack* from French *Jacques* (Latin *Jacobus*, Hebrew

Yakov), conflated it with *John*, and used it for ‘guy’: *jack-of-all-trades*, *crackerjack*, *jack-o’-lantern*. Same in fiction, whose *Jacks* are all regular guys, from *Jack and the Beanstalk* to *Jack Bauer*, *Jack Reacher*, and *Titanic*’s poor *Jack Dawson*. (Jack’s female counterpart is *Jacqueline* or *Jackie*.)

To be sure, Jack’s source *Jacob* did not come from *Yahweh*. Not every Hebrew J name is from *Yahweh*, nor every J name from Hebrew: Jill’s source *Juliana* is from the utterly Roman *Julius*. But the early popularity of biblical J names like *John* gave the Western world a lasting fondness for names of that letter, whatever their origins, and for boys and girls alike: *Jaspers* and *Jodys* and *Jasmines* and so on. (One recent baby-name book calls itself *Beyond Jennifer and Jason*.) It seems entirely right that Ian Fleming and Molière called their heroes *James Bond* and *Monsieur Jourdain*; and even alliterative *Jack Jordans* scarcely make us blink.

J is the name letter. It inspires confidence even as a mere initial. Have you ever bought clothes from J. Press, J. Crew, J. Jill, or J. Peterman? That’s where the name *Jay* comes from, the spelled-out sound of the initial—most famously in the case of *Jimmy Gatz*, the farm boy who remade himself as Fitzgerald’s *Jay Gatsby*. No other letter has been designated a name in its own right, except perhaps *Kay*. And it seems to enjoy cloning itself. Friends of my grandparents had four daughters *Judith*, *Janice*, *Joyce*, and *Jerrienne*. The narrator of Martin Amis’s book *Money* dreams along the same lines: “Oh, this tube of chicks—those *Junes*, *Jans*, *Joans*, *Jens*, *Jeans* and *Janes*.” And who is he? “I’m called John Self. But who isn’t?”

Why J?

After exploring how we use the letter J, it remains to ask *why* we use it as we do. I don’t fully understand it myself, but here’s a rough idea. It’s technical, but stay with me. English spelling really mismanages the two sounds we write as *j* and *ch*. Our *ch* is really *tsh*. I’ll show you. Say *shoe*, add *t*, *tshu*, compress it, and you have *chew*. And *j* in *jaw* is similarly *d + zh*, as in . . . well, say *grad*, then *grad-ual*, and you can hear the *d* turn into *dz*, *gradzh*. That’s our *j* sound. In effect, *j* and *ch* are blurred *d* and *t* sounds: *grad-ual*, *vir-tue*. If you’ve absorbed that, here’s the payoff.

As I have written elsewhere, T and D respectively indicate ‘up’ and ‘down’, as in *sTand*, *Tall*, *sTrive*, and *Drop*, *Deep*, *Down*. Since the reasons for this are perfectly organic—tongue position and presence or lack of vocal-cord vibration—it makes sense to designate *rapid* up-and-down movement with blurred versions of those same letters.

To spring up is thus not *dump* or *tump* but *dzhump* (*jump*). To eat with a moving jaw is not *tew* but *tshew* (*chew*). The busy Jaw is not a *daw* but a *dzhaw* (*jaw*). Not every language does it this way. Somali has lots of J words, for instance, but there’s nothing remotely jumpy or jawlike in any of them; and many languages lack a J sound entirely. Still, if we want to rationalize the letter’s up-and-down, its phonetic connection with the up-and-down specialists T and D seems like a good place to start. I notice that in Nigerian Tiv, where ‘jump’ is *tsue*, ‘jaw’ is *jegheregh*, ordinarily pronounced *dz*- but in some cases simplified to *dzegheregh*. Chomp!

But J is versatile—even versatile to the point of confusion. Not only *d* can blur into *dz*; so can *y*. This has happened several times. Many Spanish speakers now say the pronoun *yo* like *Joe* (“yo” becoming “dzho”). Latin speakers in the Dark Ages spontaneously did the same thing with *y* words like *jocus*, whose sound went from “yocus” to “dzhocus.” Our *joke* and *John* begin with *dz* because of a silly fifteen-hundred-year-old fashion. If not for that quirk,

we'd still be saying *yoke* and *Yohn* like Swedish tourists—and that is in fact the best way to understand those kinds of J words, to think of them as Y words. Y is infinitely jovial, a letter of exuberance: *yay*, *yippee*, *yippee-eye-yay*! Talking is *yacking*, laughs are *yucks*, and cheerful *yelling* means parties ahead.

German *jauchzen* (“yowk-”) means both to cheer and to celebrate, exactly like *jubilare* (“yoo-”) in Latin, the source of our *jubilant*. Yoo-hoo! Yee-haw! Ya-hoo! People all over the world make those jolly *y* noises when they're celebrating—and often if they're worshipping too. Devotees of *Bacchus*, the god of wine, used to make so much noise in their revelries—*ya ya ya ya!*—that the Greeks gave Bacchus the nickname *Iacchus* or “yahcus”! That's absolutely true—I'm not speculating there.

Some scholars think that Yahweh got his name the same way. The Bible is vague about this. Because *Yahweh* looks something like the Hebrew word *yihyeh* (“he is”), Jewish scribes liked to explain it as a variant of the verb ‘to be’. In the burning-bush story in Exodus 3:14, when Moses asks God who he is, God answers, “Tell them I AM sent you” (*'ehyeh*). I'm relying here on G. R. Driver, who wrote the article on *Yahweh*'s anglicized form *Jehovah* for the 1962 *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.

The Exodus story is thrilling, but Driver notes that earlier inscriptions and traditions give God's entire name as the single syllable *Ya*, which “was probably ejaculatory in origin (c[ompare] Gr[reek] [*Bacchus*] and [*Iacchus*]); for *yā* or *yāh* is a common Semitic exclamation.” As I said, Y is the letter of exuberance. If modern scholars are right, the name gradually evolved “from the meaningless *Yā* to the significant *Yahweh*” by “a prolongation of the ejaculation natural in moments of emotion or excitement.” Its eventual “assimilation to and explanation by a simple verb was an act of inspiration.” Isn't that nice? If God's name is a cheer, we're cheering every time we say one of our own J names aloud.

Hey, Jim! Hey, Jen!

Yee-haw!





MP: KS

Raymond Soulard, Jr.



Many Musics

(Sixth Series)

*"Black ink. Psychedelia.
Try to love the world near & far."*

i. Two Blooms

Cut roots, for a sweet touch,
living on water & packets of fresh,
I wanted to cross the line, wanted to know,
what did you see, rooted to the earth,
what did you see later in that vase?

Then one of you sagged, let go, was it hard?
I brought you to the empty flower box
of soil, just outside the window with
the vase. Closed the curtain against your
remain. Some of your petals discovered
still inside. I cringed but want to know
better than this.

The other remains inside, in the vase,
not yet, not yet, but soon. I speak of this
to noone, it's mine, this, I'm loving you,
I'm mourning for you, I listen around
me to what men say of death & I think
of you. Nothing learned yet. A hunger. A terror.

ii. Gone is Gone

Your petals don't fall like the other's
 but you burst from within as you droop
 from without. Bloom gone, yes, I know,
 & the strange fact of birthday flowers
 now on the same table. And through
 the window where the other is gone.
 How gone is gone? Is gone?

iii. Shifts Shifting

Something. A deep something I cannot
 or will not call dream or music or want.
 This world is not ours. Every last bloom
 of us falls, always has. Always will?
 Maybe so. Maybe better so. What then?

An earthquake hit an island yesterday.
 Today that girl smiled at him & one
 hit his heart. Every shift contacts
 every other shift. The bodies under
 rubble. How she moves beneath him
 in his dreams. *That* unsentimental.

iv. Remain of Remain

When you finally joined the other,
I was clumsy & your petals fell
scattered to the floor. I delivered
the remain of your remain
to the flower box, a lean, a toss, a departure.
Your bloom went elsewhere,
like the light after dusk goes.

v. Several Breaths

I look about me at the men & women
 hurrying, shiny things for sale in shops,
 the cold rain, the glaring streets,
 shift & shift & shift again. Open my mouth
 to ask, close it again. Open it now to breathe
 & maybe that's better, what I have sure for now—

& the want to feel things complexly,
 & with several reasons, so that these feelings
 will stick, stay, bloom wildly into a world
 which cannot be throttled by a word,
 a chance, an unlucky shifting, like a blade
 sweeping all away at ground level
 til nothing is left, executed cleanly by—

& you & I, the intense everything
 of you & I, there was a moment
 & its many echoes, perhaps several moments,
 you are a face, you are a surfside,
 you are a song, you are a line of words
 that catches me halfway down &
 holds. You hold. Then another hour
 I hold, my hands clean of their
 wavering ignorance, holding you, just you,

I hold you & I breathe & I say
 “breathe” to you & you breathe & we breathe
 together & another year & another place
 & I am still holding you, “breathe,” &
 you are still holding me, “breathe,” &
 it never ends, “ breathe,” the world, breathe.

vi. Of the Moon

The rest of your colors going, went,
gone, & I sit here pushing sums of decay
into forces of memory, nodding one
to the bloom that came, & two
to the one which remains, for to be alive
is to swing new music from decay
& memory for as long as possible,
disbelieving the last note will come,
is coming, disbelieve it while nodding
the stars & what just can't not be possible.

vii. How Nothing, But Then Everything

The touch I still have because never
given, a summer's day & I do not know
how. Everything gathers in how
I look at you now, & in what you
see. How close? How possible?
Years from now, dreams & hard hours say,
I am still nearing you, breathing, closer.



MP: RS

viii. Tight Jeans, & Another War

This world is not ours, & the constant hustle
among men not to know, crash through
gravity, knit new molecules from several,
cry out a song or a ship or an orchestrated
violence great enough to bear it down
at last. The hungers within will to surround
the world in flesh or words or secret, subtle
fineness, possess until one is another,
& time stops & moves again with a gesture,
& she watches among pink shreds &
pools of descending fire, wondering if
the next touch will break or tend her want.

ix. Raw From Hours

The hungers within will to surround the world
 in flesh or words or the gross massings
 of godmongers, how a few men can touch
 the map & decide. Mountains decide our fates
 eventually, what the seas less willing yield,
 how the skies change in color & the air
 in subtleties, telling not a few men now but
 all here & hereon how we've done—

So when I look at you, my love, think of what
 you are by soul & spirit, how the few men
 are shifting maps we reside, & how the mountains
 will tend the world its unfolding when
 these men lie again simply in her arms,
 I think: what we do matters & matters,
 & very much matters. And little, & less,
 & none at all. The glare in one's face,
 the music of an excited night, the ways flesh
 insists to its pleasures, the ways hearts
 shape these further still—

I am left ever half-exposed & crying,
 half-hidden, crouched close, in how much
 I love the world & how much I love you.

x. Good Glare of Gone

I thought it was your eyes, or your laugh,
or wetly tickling your crack the way
into you & never return. A song, a bloom,
a ragged card wrought by my hours &
strangeness. But these were simply better &
worse blows on your outmost door.

Years to this moon & more willing you flow
me in on these absent nights, through
subterranea, & the mystery in how then
still touches now, forth & back & forth,
& where I still find you in my own.

xi. Get Clean or Die Trying

Another eruption, the earth wordless by
 her live fury, I believe her, I believe you,
 you are furious, human bodies live
 on your body & abuse it, eat & breathe
 of it & abuse it. And more eat & breathe
 of it, & more abuse it.

Reach into my heart, mother, my true mother,
 the one who birthed & cares for my kind,
 reach into my heart, mother, deeper
 than any has ever known me, feel how raw,
 how twisted in music & want & brotherhood
 for all, how angry, how like your fury
 is mine, I am small, but I am like you.

I do not know of men's gods & idols
 this deep in me, little reaches me
 but music, of breath, of beat, of dream,
 & I wish to service you as you service me,
 from this simple core & terminus, let me sing
 & better know how to sing, sing for you
 by gesture to all, for all that you love,
 let me be plainly one of your musics,
 let this power between us unbraid.

xii. Music of My Chaos

World hard from the groin & nothing
rhymes with moon. I keep asking
on the nights toughest with sinews of want,
keep asking when the soft word or
the mild touch, keep asking with
the years' stretching howl of crazy blood
to tonight, what rhymes with the moon?

In the shift of lights, a few years of men
among the dozens boys, the mass willing
to live by more glare but less heat,
accede what the selfish gods of men demand,
whatever rhymes beneath the moon. I ask
hard from the groin, unaccepting the control
or the chaos, what rhymes with you, moon?

By the nights of mad vision when too much
felt, the world of men both vicious & dull,
the content is still found in singing discontent,
nothing rhymes with moon, nothing good
rhymes with moon. Or, worse to it,
everything rhymes with moon & I am years
past being bluster & man enough to say it plain.



MP: RS

xiii. Sky Isn't Possible Tonight

The questions aren't many. Who to fuck.
 What to eat next. Whether a god is due
 by praise or privation. Not many.
 Whether a nation of men will betray
 itself by its ideals or its hungers. Who to blame
 & how to punish. How the books will tell it
 so that further bravery isn't possible & little wanted.

xiv. Urban Spectacular

An old, drunk man dozes near, with a clutch
 of bills & coins, a cigarette for later,
 a bill due but fuck it. The stars are somewhere
 out there, they've always been, couple of
 drinks now, the radio later at home,
 with its remedies for skin & flatulence & time itself.

xv. Bauhaus (Til Next)

So I wrote here, for years, hard &
 deep. Sometimes awful. Sometimes not.
 A thank you. Remembrance. Til next.

xvi. Interruption

What rhymes with the moon is Art
 What slips freely through the hours is Art
 What flows between limbs is Art
 What touches deep & lasts is Art
 What builds from sleep is Art

What this broad new view in weakest hours
 is Art
 What now seen toward that distant rock
 from this nearly drown is Art
 What sings nearer is art, sings nearer,
 a hand, a blind eye, a voice of leaves,
 a white tree, lay with me, white tree

What do I want? “You want Art”
 What do I want? “You want Art”
 What do I want? “You want Art”

What must I do? “Rhyme with the moon”
 What must I do? “Rhyme better with the moon”
 What must I do? “You must return now &
 rhyme better with the moon”

What of the white tree? “The White tree is Art”
 What of the white tree? “The White tree rhymes
 with the moon”
 What of the white tree? “You must return now &
 rhyme with the moon”

What rhymes with the moon is Art
 What returns me from waves on hours is Art
 What wakes me to my bed & my limbs is Art
 What again walks me among clouds & men is Art

What remains, reigns, in the deepest forests
 of concrete & metal is a shining, a white tree, is Art.

xvii. Birdy Say Ku-Ku!

I'd call it a soap opera,
the strange and flimsy human condition,
but sometimes not, sometimes it's art.

* * *

Sometime's it's art, she looked at me.
Her failure. Her body's strange exception.
Those poems are old, they're mine.

* * *

My poems are old, not you.
Not you, my poems, some new.
You're gone, here are new poems.

* * *

Here are new poems, feed from.
Trust of years, still here, these.
I tell another, trust the flow.

* * *

The flow, oh, trust the flow.
Art, the power, universe of lights,
how music travels, one to next.

* * *

One to another, laying heads close.
Strange condition, flimsy, old, new.
Always the flow, Art, the power.

xviii. Portrait in Sepia

The story was told under a glass roof,
 the snowflakes hitting it from dark skies,
 the doctor had assured us all that sex
 tied souls deep into their dirt & the way
 out was a hard strike & a crying release.
 Most nodded, who hadn't cum & seen a glance
 of God, or lost & felt the fall within,
 the kind nobody else sees, ground rushing close.

"But what of the rest? The moments tending
 a sick mother, feeding her water, helping
 her remember an old name?" The doctor shook
 his head. "There are mysteries, grant this,
 but the root . . . the root! of human anguish
 is what I say." Most still nodded, it was true.

Then I remembered another night, or it
 was a dream. There were bodies, like always,
 & the moon would have moved a few to couple
 but, no, yes, there were drums among
 the trees, there were shouts, the bodies & fires
 danced one another like nothing was ever lost
 & here it was again, returned. I woke up
 alone in the morning, the ground, damp with dew,
 a scattered, grubby soul, yet loved & needed by all.

xix. Rose Garden

Even shorn to picturesque the wilds bloom
through, noises of mate & make, trees great
against an unconquered sky. When aware,
when awake, my breath calms to all
becoming, there is movement, there is change,
all is well. Mine to know, mind to find,
if not good in every man's eyes, still, all is well.



xx. Fears & Regrets

Several fears & regrets. More than that.
 Anyone reading this, sure, nod, several, more.
 I can think of faces I caused pain,
 hearts I damaged, & those who damaged me.
 I can think of places unseen, moments gone.
 You'll nod, you've got yours, whatever mask you wear.

Would you agree too: fucking sick of it?
 Nothing goes away, nothing returns.
 Everything's here, alive, buried, somewhere.

And I think, then, why? And why?
 I think it's lack of seeing the world
 as a world. Not a backdrop for human drama
 but a wide, strange world. Green & wild.
 Full of healing & death. A million hungers
 combating that men can affect but do not own.

Somewhere, in all of it, every answer
 to every question, here, this world,
 a cure to sick, a plant to divine the stars & within,
 every last delicious possibility of sense,
 still, now, tonight, you with your fears & regrets,
 me with mine. Several & more. And all this.

xxi. What Groove Low

I wanted to find the other for
what I knew wasn't enough.
Listened, heard nothing. No voices from dreams.
No wonder at leaves in the wind.
I had to find other. Not a building of statues
& a grim book. More the mystery of a face
turned to another, a passing, protected moment.
I had to find other, if there were roots
to beauty not contrived by a man. If these roots
reached through & past a mortal life.
It became a question of "why?" & then
a question of even more. The more years passed,
the fewer remaining, however many,
no longer a question of the give or the take,
or finding the other, or the many others,
no longer any question at all, but how to sing
like beat & breath unknowing mine or the world's.

xxii. War for the Moon

You see a dead stone with brute power to influence.
 We see a companion living in the sky.
 You see affect, we feel relation.

You use tools to dislodge truth from its darkness.
 We feel the truth does not cower but stands
 proudly everywhere, singing worlds to our deafness.
 You vow to know. We yearn to remember.

xxiii. The Argument

A great leader grinds through to top of the mountain.
 A good leader cuts a path.
 A great leader leaves bodies in his wake.
 A good leader leaves inspirations for others.
 A great leader creates a legend & then goes.
 A good leader creates a body of instructions
 & never goes—

xxiv. Wage Slave (ii.)

I woke with a throbbing ankle & a need
 to piss. I hoped she slept still beside me.
 That day a boss had asked, "What are you
 worth to my company? Bring me a list."
 A man less smart than sharp, amused
 by his own occasional bursts of modesty.
 Once a soldier, 20 years & 50 fewer pounds ago.

My ankle throbbed & I needed to piss &
 I didn't want to wake her. She hadn't been
 sleeping well. I lay close, shock & anger
 mingled closer. Did they meet at my ankle?
 How could that be? I finally rose for
 a pain pill & to piss out the day. Walked fine
 She shifted & mumbled her concern. "Nothing."

A piss in the dark is a low thing of beauty,
 more relieving than the pill. I didn't sleep
 for a long time, my mind pummeling
 the old argument between now, tomorrow,
 & eternity. The first is mine, second to the boss,
 & eternity to something like that long piss,
 & my wish to keep a loved one in her peace.

xxv. The Celestial

The celestial is nearing, is breathing,
 is moving in lights. The heated torso,
 however draped, however slept with daylight
 & polity, is clue, in arch & curve,
 to celestial, what shines by lawless music.
 I wonder how the chains instruct their own
 release, how a turn, or a wrench, in that other
 direction, & how freedom bleeds, how freedom flows,
 how the celestial was never the treasure held in secret.

xxvi. Still, & Ever

Nothing learned yet, though the gurus
 & kings will speak by fires & drums,
 will line their platforms with a thousand
 naked torsos, point to strange worlds coming,
 where virtue fuels & starlight reigns,
 nothing learned yet. Flesh is hunger,
this is the strange new world, your king
 are senses that behold, your guru
 is how mind shapes the world as song of your days.

xxvii. World is Not Ours

In that dream I was with blood kin
 on a happy wedding day, hours unreal
 to memories, how the mind worries,
 how it gnaws back, how that day
 might have turned, it didn't. Everyone
 smiling, relieved. Weddings are good days.

xxviii. Quack: A Love Song

There was a newspaper article about
 governments killing spies, their own citizens,
 & someone turned to me with a sneer.
 I nodded, every king rules with
 a bloody hand, a darkened heart.
 A man governed is a man in your shadow,
 & the failing in how light could otherwise be cast.

xxix. Continuance

Here are new poems, the ones since
 I loved you, & you, & you. Each one
 crawling from the previous, from the ugliest
 hours, the words, the breaks in flesh &
 hearts. New poems, some to remember,
 some to mourn, then a few to
 simply look on. What next, & next,
 & the possibilities for a long time
 were few. Breathe in, breathe out.
 Then new vines along the path, & then
 many paths. Many paths, new poems.
 New poems, many musics. Continuance.

xxx. East-West

Once I lived here, a small town in a green place,
& it was my home & where I loved. Here was here,
the rest was there. Years & years.

Then I moved here, for awhile, but the borders
were fuzzier. I read books & wondered about
there & there. Here was still here, but less so.

Bleeding, angry, curious, I fled from here to a
larger here. A deeper history, & for awhile
the waves of there & there receded from my steps.

Then returned, as myths, as mountains, as
far-stretching horizons, here shifted & shifted
again as though not to settle but to keep dancing.

Now I look over all the heres & decide to move on
by returning. An old here beckons new & I think
maybe here is just shorthand for everywhere & nowhere.



To be continued in Cenacle | 73 | June 2010



Joan Didion



Slouching Toward Bethlehem

[Essay]

Appeared first in 1967 in *The Saturday Evening Post*

The center was not holding. It was a country of bankruptcy notices and public-auction announcements and commonplace reports of casual killings and misplaced children and abandoned homes and vandals who misplaced even the four-letter words they scrawled. It was a country in which families routinely disappeared, trailing bad checks and repossession papers. Adolescents drifted from city to torn city, sloughing off both the past and the future as snakes shed their skins, children who were never taught and would never now learn the games that had held the society together. People were missing. Children were missing. Parents were missing. Those left behind filed desultory missing-persons reports, then moved on themselves.

It was not a country in open revolution. It was not a country under enemy siege. It was the United States of America in the cold late spring of 1967, and the market was steady and the G.N.P. high and a great many articulate people seemed to have a sense of high social purpose and it might have been a spring of brave hopes and national promise, but it was not, and more and more people had the uneasy apprehension that it was not. All that seemed clear was that at some point we had aborted ourselves and butchered the job, and because nothing else seemed so relevant I decided to go to San Francisco. San Francisco was where the social hemorrhaging was showing up. San Francisco was where the missing children were gathering and calling themselves “hippies.” When I first went to San Francisco in that cold late spring of 1967 I did not even know what I wanted to find out, and so I just stayed around awhile, and made a few friends.

A sign on Haight Street, San Francisco:

*Last Easter Day
My Christopher Robin wandered away.
He called April 10th
But he hasn't called since
He said he was coming home
But he hasn't shown.*

*If you see him on Haight
Please tell him not to wait
I need him now
I don't care how
If he needs the bread
I'll send it ahead.*

*If there's hope
Please write me a note
If he's still there
Tell him how much I care
Where he's at I need to know
For I really love him so!*

*Deeply,
Marla*

*Marla Pence
12702 NE. Multnomah
Portland, Ore. 97230
503/252-2720.*

I am looking for somebody called Deadeye and I hear he is on the Street this afternoon doing a little business, so I keep an eye out for him and pretend to read the signs in the Psychedelic Shop on Haight Street when a kid, sixteen, seventeen, comes in and sits on the floor beside me.

"What are you looking for," he says.

I say nothing much.

"I been out of my mind for three days," he says. He tells me he's been shooting crystal, which I already pretty much know because he does not bother to keep his sleeves rolled down over the needle tracks. He came up from Los Angeles some number of weeks ago, he doesn't remember what number, and now he'll take off for New York, if he can find a ride. I show him a sign offering a ride to Chicago. He wonders where Chicago is. I ask where he comes from. "Here," he says. I mean before here. "San Jose. Chula Vista, I dunno. My mother's in Chula Vista."

A few days later I run into him in Golden Gate Park when the Grateful Dead are playing. I ask if he found a ride to New York. "I hear New York's a bummer," he says.

Deadeye never showed up that day on the Street, and somebody says maybe I can find him at his place. It is three o'clock and Deadeye is in bed. Somebody else is asleep on the living-room couch, and a girl is sleeping on the floor beneath a poster of Allen Ginsberg, and there are a couple of girls in pajamas making instant coffee. One of the girls introduces me to the friend on the couch, who extends one arm but does not get up because he is naked. Deadeye and I have a mutual acquaintance, but he does not mention his name in front of the others. "The man you talked to," he says, or "that man I was referring to earlier." The man is a cop.

The room is overheated and the girl on the floor is sick. Deadeye says she has been sleeping for twenty-four hours now. "Lemme ask you something," he says. "You want some grass?" I say I have to be moving on. "You want it," Deadeye says, "it's yours." Deadeye used to be an Angel around Los Angeles but that was a few years ago. "Right now," he says, "I'm trying to set up this groovy religious group—'Teenage Evangelism.'"

Don and Max want to go out to dinner but Don is only eating macrobiotic so we end up in Japantown again. Max is telling me how he lives free of all the old middle-class Freudian hang-ups. "I've had this old lady for a couple of months now, maybe she makes something special for my dinner and I come in three days late and tell her I've been balling some other chick, well, maybe she shouts a little but then I say 'That's me, baby,' and she laughs and says 'That's you, Max.'" Max says it works both ways. "I mean if she comes in and tells me she wants to ball Don, maybe, I say 'O.K., baby, it's your trip.'"

Max sees his life as a triumph over "don'ts." Among the don'ts he had done before he was twenty-one were peyote, alcohol, mescaline, and Methedrine. He was on a Meth trip for three years in New York and Tangier before he found acid. He first tried peyote when he was in an Arkansas boys' school and got down to the Gulf and met "an Indian kid who was doing a don't. Then every weekend I could get loose I'd hitchhike seven hundred miles to Brownsville, Texas, so I could cop peyote. Peyote went for thirty cents a button down in Brownsville on the street." Max dropped in and out of most of the schools and fashionable clinics in the eastern half of America, his standard technique for dealing with boredom being to leave. Example: Max was in a hospital in New York and "the night nurse was a groovy spade, and in the afternoon for therapy there was a chick from Israel who was interesting, but there was nothing much to do in the morning, so I left."

We drink some more green tea and talk about going up to Malakoff Diggings in Nevada County because some people are starting a commune there and Max thinks it would be a groove to take acid in the diggings. He says maybe we could go next week, or the week after, or anyway sometime before his case comes up. Almost everybody I meet in San Francisco has to go to court at some point in the middle future. I never ask why.

I am still interested in how Max got rid of his middle-class Freudian hang-ups and I ask if he is now completely free.

"Nah," he says. "I got acid."

Max drops a 250- or 350-microgram tab every six or seven days.

Max and Don share a joint in the car and we go over to North Beach to find out if Otto, who has a temporary job there, wants to go to Malakoff Diggings. Otto is pitching some electronics engineers. The engineers view our arrival with some interest, maybe, I think, because Max is wearing bells and an Indian headband. Max has a low tolerance for straight engineers and their Freudian hang-ups. "Look at 'em," he says. "They're always yelling 'queer' and then they come sneaking down to the Haight-Ashbury trying to get the hippie chick because she fucks."

We do not get around to asking Otto about Malakoff Diggings because he wants to tell me about a fourteen-year-old he knows who got busted in the Park the other day. She was just walking through the Park, he says, minding her own, carrying her schoolbooks, when the cops took her in and booked her and gave her a pelvic. "*Fourteen years old*," Otto says. "*A pelvic*."

"Coming down from acid," he adds, "that could be a real bad trip."

I call Otto the next afternoon to see if he can reach the fourteen-year-old. It turns out she is tied up with rehearsals for her junior-high-school play, *The Wizard of Oz*. "Yellow-brick-road time," Otto says. Otto was sick all day. He thinks it was some cocaine-and-wheat somebody gave him.

There are always little girls around rock groups—the same little girls who used to hang around saxophone players, girls who live on the celebrity and power and sex a band projects when it plays—and there are three of them out here this afternoon in Sausalito where the Grateful Dead rehearse. They are all pretty and two of them still have baby fat and one of them dances by herself with her eyes closed.

I ask a couple of the girls what they do.

“I just kind of come out here a lot,” one of them says.

“I just sort of know the Dead,” the other says.

The one who just sort of knows the Dead starts cutting a loaf of French bread on the piano bench. The boys take a break and one of them talks about playing the Los Angeles Cheechah, which is in the old Aragon Ballroom. “We were up there drinking beer where Lawrence Welk used to sit,” Jerry Garcia says.

The little girl who was dancing by herself giggles. “Too much,” she says softly. Her eyes are still closed.

Somebody said that if I was going to meet some runaways I better pick up a few hamburgers and Cokes on the way, so I did, and we are eating them in the Park together, me, Debbie who is fifteen, and Jeff who is sixteen. Debbie and Jeff ran away twelve days ago, walked out of school one morning with \$100 between them. Because a missing-juvenile is out on Debbie—she was on probation because her mother had once taken her to the police station and declared her incorrigible—this is only the second time they have been out of a friend’s apartment since they got to San Francisco. The first time they went over to the Fairmont Hotel and rode the outside elevator, three times up and three times down. “Wow,” Jeff says, and that is all he can think to say, about that.

I ask why they ran away.

“My parents said I had to go to church,” Debbie says. “And they wouldn’t let me dress the way I wanted. In the seventh grade my skirts were longer than anybody’s—it got better in the eighth grade, but still.”

“Your mother was kind of a bummer,” Jeff agrees.

“They didn’t like Jeff. They didn’t like my girlfriends. My father thought I was cheap and he told me so. I had a C average and he told me I couldn’t date until I raised it, and that bugged me too.”

“My mother was just a genuine all-American bitch,” Jeff says. “She was really troublesome about hair. Also she didn’t like boots. It was really weird.”

“Tell about the chores,” Debbie says.

“For example I had chores. If I didn’t finish ironing my shirts for the week I couldn’t go out for the weekend. It was weird. Wow.”

Debbie giggles and shakes her head. “This year’s gonna be wild.”

“We’re just gonna let it all happen,” Jeff says. “Everything’s in the future, you can’t pre-plan it. First we get jobs, then a place to live. Then, I dunno.”

Jeff finishes off the French fries and gives some thought to what kind of job he could get. “I always kinda dug metal shop, welding, stuff like that.” Maybe he could work on cars, I say. “I’m not too mechanically minded,” he says. “Anyway you can’t pre-plan.”

“I could get a job baby-sitting,” Debbie says. “Or in a dime store.”

“You’re always talking about getting a job in a dime store,” Jeff says.

"That's because I worked in a dime store already."

Debbie is buffing her fingernails with the belt to her suède jacket. She is annoyed because she chipped a nail and because I do not have any polish remover in the car. I promise to get her to a friend's apartment so that she can redo her manicure, but something has been bothering me and as I fiddle with the ignition I finally ask it. I ask them to think back to when they were children, to tell me what they had wanted to be when they were grown up, how they had seen the future then.

Jeff throws a Coca-Cola bottle out the car window. "I can't remember I ever thought about it," he says.

"I remember I wanted to be a veterinarian once," Debbie says. "But now I'm more or less working in the vein of being an artist or a model or a cosmetologist. Or something."

I hear quite a bit about one cop, Officer Arthur Gerrans, whose name has become a synonym for zealotry on the Street. "He's Officer Krupke," Max once told me. Max is not personally wild about Officer Gerrans because Officer Gerrans took Max in after the Human Be-In last winter, that's the big Human Be-In in Golden Gate Park where 20,000 people got turned on free, or 10,000 did, or some number did, but then Officer Gerrans has busted almost everyone in the District at one time or another. Presumably to forestall a cult of personality, Officer Gerrans was transferred out of the District not long ago, and when I see him it is not at the Park Station but at the Central Station on Greenwich Avenue.

We are in an interrogation room, and I am interrogating Officer Gerrans. He is young and blond and wary and I go in slow. I wonder what he thinks "the major problems" in the Haight are.

Officer Gerrans thinks it over. "I would say the major problems there," he says finally, "the major problems are narcotics and juveniles. Juveniles and narcotics, those are your major problems."

I write that down.

"Just one moment," Officer Gerrans says, and leaves the room. When he comes back he tells me that I cannot talk to him without permission from Chief Thomas Cahill.

"In the meantime," Officer Gerrans adds, pointing at the notebook in which I have written *major problems: juveniles, narcotics*, "I'll take those notes."

The next day I apply for permission to talk to Officer Gerrans and also to Chief Cahill. A few days later a sergeant returns my call.

"We have finally received clearance from the Chief per your request," the sergeant says, "and that is taboo."

I wonder why it is taboo to talk to Officer Gerrans.

Officer Gerrans is involved in court cases coming to trial.

I wonder why it is taboo to talk to Chief Cahill.

The Chief has pressing police business.

I wonder if I can talk to anyone at all in the Police Department.

"No," the sergeant says, "not at the particular moment."

Which was my last official contact with the San Francisco Police Department.

Norris and I are standing around the Panhandle and Norris is telling me how it is all set up for a friend to take me to Big Sur. I say what I really want to do is spend a few days with Norris



and his wife and the rest of the people in their house. Norris says it would be a lot easier if I'd take some acid. I say I'm unstable. Norris says all right, anyway, *grass*, and he squeezes my hand.

One day Norris asks how old I am. I tell him I am thirty-two.

It takes a few minutes, but Norris rises to it. "Don't worry," he says at last. "There's old hippies too."

It is a pretty nice evening and nothing much happening and Max brings his old lady, Sharon, over to the Warehouse. The Warehouse, which is where Don and a floating number of other people live, is not actually a warehouse but the garage of a condemned hotel. The Warehouse was conceived as total theater, a continual happening, and I always feel good there. What happened ten minutes ago or what is going to happen a half hour from now tends to fade from mind in the Warehouse. Somebody is usually doing something interesting, like working on a light show, and there are a lot of interesting things around, like an old Chevrolet touring car which is used as a bed and a vast American flag fluttering up in the shadows and an overstuffed chair suspended like a swing from the rafters, the point of that being that it gives you a sensory-deprivation high.

One reason I particularly like the Warehouse is that a child named Michael is staying there now. Michael's mother, Sue Ann, is a sweet wan girl who is always in the kitchen cooking seaweed or baking macrobiotic bread while Michael amuses himself with joss sticks or an old tambourine or a rocking horse with the paint worn off. The first time I ever saw Michael was on that rocking horse, a very blond and pale and dirty child on a rocking horse with no paint. A blue theatrical spotlight was the only light in the house that afternoon, and there was Michael in it, crooning to the wooden horse. Michael is three years old. He is a bright child but does not yet talk.

This particular night Michael is trying to light his joss sticks and there are the usual number of people floating through and they all drift into Don's room and sit on the bed and pass joints. Sharon is very excited when she arrives. "*Don*," she cries, breathless. "We got some STP today." At this time STP is a pretty big deal, remember; nobody yet knew what it was and it was relatively, although just relatively, hard to come by. Sharon is blond and scrubbed and probably seventeen, but Max is a little vague about that since his court case comes up in a month or so and he doesn't need statutory rape on top of it. Sharon's parents were living apart when last she saw them. She does not miss school or anything much about her past, except her younger brother. "I want to turn him on," she confided one day. "He's fourteen now, that's the perfect age. I know where he goes to high school and someday I'll just go get him."

Time passes and I lose the thread and when I pick it up again Max seems to be talking about what a beautiful thing it is the way Sharon washes dishes.

"Well it *is* beautiful," Sharon says. "*Everything* is. I mean you watch that blue detergent blob run on the plate, watch the grease cut—well, it can be a real trip."

Pretty soon now, maybe next month, maybe later, Max and Sharon plan to leave for Africa and India, where they can live off the land. "I got this little trust fund, see," Max says, "which is useful in that it tells cops and border patrols I'm O.K., but living off the land is the thing. You can get your high and get your dope in the city, O.K., but we gotta get out somewhere and live organically."

"Roots and things," Sharon says, lighting another joss stick for Michael. Michael's mother is still in the kitchen cooking seaweed. "You can eat them."

Maybe eleven o'clock, we move from the Warehouse to the place where Max and Sharon live with a couple named Tom and Barbara. Sharon is pleased to get home ("I hope you got some hash joints fixed in the kitchen," she says to Barbara by way of greeting) and everybody is pleased to show off the apartment, which has a lot of flowers and candles and paisleys. Max and Sharon and Tom and Barbara get pretty high on hash, and everyone dances a little and we do some liquid projections and set up a strobe and take turns getting a high on that. Quite late, somebody called Steve comes in with a pretty, dark girl. They have been to a meeting of people who practice a Western yoga, but they do not seem to want to talk about that. They lie on the floor awhile, and then Steve stands up.

"Max," he says, "I want to say one thing."

"It's your trip." Max is edgy.

"I found love on acid. But I lost it. And now I'm finding it again. With nothing but grass."

Max mutters that heaven and hell are both in one's karma.

"That's what bugs me about psychedelic art," Steve says.

"What about psychedelic art," Max says. "I haven't seen much psychedelic art."

Max is lying on a bed with Sharon, and Steve leans down to him. "Groove, baby," he says. "You're a groove."

Steve sits down then and tells me about one summer when he was at a school of design in Rhode Island and took thirty trips, the last ones all bad. I ask why they were bad. "I could tell you it was my neuroses," he says, "but fuck that."

A few days later I drop by to see Steve in his apartment. He paces nervously around the room he uses as a studio and shows me some paintings. We do not seem to be getting to the point.

"Maybe you noticed something going on at Max's," he says abruptly.

It seems that the girl he brought, the dark pretty one, had once been Max's girl. She had followed him to Tangier and now to San Francisco. But Max has Sharon. "So she's kind of staying around here," Steve says.

Steve is troubled by a lot of things. He is twenty-three, was raised in Virginia, and has the idea that California is the beginning of the end. "I feel it's insane," he says, and his voice drops. "This chick tells me there's no meaning to life but it doesn't matter, we'll just flow right out. There've been times I felt like packing up and taking off for the East Coast again, at least there I had a *target*. At least there you expect that it's going to *happen*." He lights a cigarette for me and his hands shake. "Here you know it's not going to."

I ask what it is that is supposed to happen.

"I don't know," he says. "Something. Anything."

Arthur Lisch is on the telephone in his kitchen, trying to sell VISTA a program for the District. "We already *got* an emergency," he says into the telephone, meanwhile trying to disentangle his daughter, age one and a half, from the cord. "We don't get help, nobody can guarantee what's going to happen. We've got people sleeping in the streets here. We've got people starving to death." He pauses. "All right," he says then, and his voice rises. "So they're doing it by choice. So what."

By the time he hangs up he has limned what strikes me as a Dickensian picture of life on the edge of Golden Gate Park, but then this is my first exposure to Arthur Lisch's "riot-on-

the-street-unless” pitch. Arthur Lisch is a kind of leader of the Diggers, who, in the official District mythology, are supposed to be a group of anonymous good guys with no thought in their collective head but to lend a helping hand. The official District mythology also has it that the Diggers have no “leaders,” but nonetheless Arthur Lisch is one. Arthur Lisch is also a paid worker for the American Friends’ Service Committee and he lives with his wife, Jane, and their two small children in a railroad flat, which on this particular day lacks organization. For one thing the telephone keeps ringing. Arthur promises to attend a hearing at city hall. Arthur promises to “send Edward, he’s O.K.” Arthur promises to get a good group, maybe the Loading Zone, to play free for a Jewish benefit. For a second thing the baby is crying, and she does not stop until Jane Lisch appears with a jar of Gerber’s Junior Chicken Noodle Dinner. Another confusing element is somebody named Bob, who just sits in the room and looks at his toes. First he looks at the toes on one foot, then at the toes on the other. I make several attempts to include Bob in the conversation before I realize he is on a bad trip. Moreover, there are two people hacking up what looks like a side of beef on the kitchen floor, the idea being that when it gets hacked up, Jane Lisch can cook it for the daily Digger feed in the Park.

Arthur Lisch does not seem to notice any of this. He just keeps talking about cybernated societies and the guaranteed annual wage and riot on the Street, unless.

I call the Lisches a day or so later and ask for Arthur. Jane Lisch says he’s next door taking a shower because somebody is coming down from a bad trip in their bathroom. Besides the freak-out in the bathroom they are expecting a psychiatrist in to look at Bob. Also a doctor for Edward, who is not O.K. at all but has the flu. Jane says maybe I should talk to Chester Anderson. She will not give me his number.

Chester Anderson is a legacy of the Beat Generation, a man in his middle thirties whose peculiar hold on the District derives from his possession of a mimeograph machine, on which he prints communiqués signed “the communication company.” It is another tenet of the official District mythology that the communication company will print anything anybody has to say, but in fact Chester Anderson prints only what he writes himself, agrees with, or considers harmless or dead matter. His statements, which are left in piles and pasted on windows around Haight Street, are regarded with some apprehension in the District and with considerable interest by outsiders, who study them, like China watchers, for subtle shifts in obscure ideologies. An Anderson communiqué might be doing something as specific as fingering someone who is said to have set up a marijuana bust, or it might be working in a more general vein:

Pretty little 16-year-old middle-class chick comes to the Haight to see what it’s all about & gets picked up by a 17-year-old street dealer who spends all day shooting her full of speed again & again, then feeds her 3,000 mikes & raffles off her temporarily unemployed body for the biggest Haight Street gangbang since the night before last. The politics and ethics of ecstasy. Rape is as common as bullshit on Haight Street. Kids are starving on the Street. Minds and bodies are being maimed as we watch, a scale model of Vietnam.

Somebody other than Jane Lisch gave me an address for Chester Anderson, 443 Arguello, but 443 Arguello does not exist. I telephone the wife of the man who gave me 443 Arguello and she says it’s 742 Arguello.

“But don’t go up there,” she says.

I say I'll telephone.

"There's no number," she says. "I can't give it to you."

"742 Arguello," I say.

"No," she says. "I don't know. And don't go there. And don't use either my name or my husband's name if you do."

She is the wife of a full professor of English at San Francisco State College. I decide to lie low on the question of Chester Anderson for awhile.

Paranoia strikes deep—

Into your life it will creep—

is a song the Buffalo

Springfield sings.

The appeal of Malakoff Diggings has kind of faded out but Max says why don't I come to his place, just be there, the next time he takes acid. Tom will take it too, probably Sharon, maybe Barbara. We can't do it for six or seven days because Max and Tom are in STP space now. They are not crazy about STP but it has advantages. "You've still got your forebrain," Tom says. "I could write behind STP, but not behind acid." This is the first time I have heard of anything you can't do behind acid, also the first time I have heard that Tom writes.

Otto is feeling better because he discovered it wasn't the cocaine-and-wheat that made him sick. It was the chicken pox, which he caught baby-sitting for Big Brother and the Holding Company one night when they were playing. I go over to see him and meet Vicki, who sings now and then with a group called the Jook Savages and lives at Otto's place. Vicki dropped out of Laguna High "because I had mono," followed the Grateful Dead up to San Francisco one time and has been here "for a while." Her mother and father are divorced, and she does not see her father, who works for a network in New York. A few months ago he came out to do a documentary on the District and tried to find her, but couldn't. Later he wrote her a letter in care of her mother urging her to go back to school. Vicki guesses maybe she will sometime but she doesn't see much point in it right now.

* * *

We are eating a little tempura in Japantown, Chet Helms and I, and he is sharing some of his insights with me. Until a couple of years ago Chet Helms never did much besides hitchhiking, but now he runs the Avalon Ballroom and flies over the Pole to check out the London scene and says things like "Just for the sake of clarity I'd like to categorize the aspects of primitive religion as I see it." Right now he is talking about Marshall McLuhan and how the printed word is finished, out, over. "*The East Village Other* is one of the few papers in America whose books are in the black," he says. "I know that from reading *Barron's*."

A new group is supposed to play in the Panhandle today but they are having trouble with the amplifier and I sit in the sun listening to a couple of little girls, maybe seventeen years old. One of them has a lot of makeup and the other wears Levi's and cowboy boots. The boots do not look like an affectation, they look like she came up off a ranch about two weeks ago. I wonder what she is doing here in the Panhandle trying to make friends with a city girl who is snubbing

her but I do not wonder long, because she is homely and awkward and I think of her going all the way through the consolidated union high school out there where she comes from and nobody ever asking her to go into Reno on Saturday night for a drive-in movie and a beer on the riverbank, so she runs. "I know a thing about dollar bills," she is saying now. "You get one that says '1111' in one corner and '1111' in another, you take it down to Dallas, Texas, they'll give you \$15 for it."

"Who will?" the city girl asks.

"I don't know."

"There are only three significant pieces of data in the world today," is another thing Chet Helms told me one night. We were at the Avalon and the big strobe was going and the colored lights and the Day-Glo painting and the place was full of high-school kids trying to look turned on. The Avalon sound system projects 126 decibels at 100 feet but to Chet Helms the sound is just there, like the air, and he talks through it. "The first is," he said, "God died last year and was obited by the press. The second is, fifty percent of the population is or will be under twenty-five." A boy shook a tambourine toward us and Chet smiled benevolently at him. "The third," he said, "is that they got twenty billion irresponsible dollars to spend."

Thursday comes, some Thursday, and Max and Tom and Sharon and maybe Barbara are going to take some acid. They want to drop it about three o'clock. Barbara has baked fresh bread, Max has gone to the Park for fresh flowers, and Sharon is making a sign for the door which reads "DO NOT DISTURB, RING, KNOCK, OR IN ANY OTHER WAY DISTURB. LOVE." This is not how I would put it to either the health inspector, who is due this week, or any of the several score narcotics agents in the neighborhood, but I figure the sign is Sharon's trip.

Once the sign is finished Sharon gets restless. "Can I at least play the new record?" she asks Max.

"Tom and Barbara want to save it for when we're high."

"I'm getting bored, just sitting around here."

Max watches her jump up and walk out. "That's what you call pre-acid uptight jitters," he says.

Barbara is not in evidence. Tom keeps walking in and out. "All these innumerable last-minute things you have to do," he mutters.

"It's a tricky thing, acid," Max says after a while. He is turning the stereo on and off. "When a chick takes acid, it's all right if she's alone, but when she's living with somebody this edginess comes out. And if the hour-and-a-half process before you take the acid doesn't go smooth . . ." He picks up a roach and studies it, then adds, "They're having a little thing back there with Barbara."

Sharon and Tom walk in.

"You pissed off too?" Max asks Sharon.

Sharon does not answer.

Max turns to Tom. "Is she all right?"

"Yeh."

"Can we take acid?" Max is on edge.

"I don't know what she's going to do."

“What do you want to do?”

“What I want to do depends on what she wants to do.” Tom is rolling some joints, first rubbing the papers with a marijuana resin he makes himself. He takes the joints back to the bedroom, and Sharon goes with him.

“Something like this happens every time people take acid,” Max says. After a while he brightens and develops a theory around it. “Some people don’t like to go out of themselves, that’s the trouble. You probably wouldn’t. You’d probably like only a quarter of a tab. There’s still an ego on a quarter tab, and it wants things. Now if that thing is balling—and your old lady or your old man is off somewhere flashing and doesn’t want to be touched—well, you get put down on acid, you can be on a bumner for months.”

Sharon drifts in, smiling. “Barbara might take some acid, we’re all feeling better, we smoked a joint.”

At three-thirty that afternoon Max, Tom, and Sharon placed tabs under their tongues and sat down together in the living room to wait for the flash. Barbara stayed in the bedroom, smoking hash. During the next four hours a window banged once in Barbara’s room, and about five-thirty some children had a fight on the street. A curtain billowed in the afternoon wind. A cat scratched a beagle in Sharon’s lap. Except for the sitar music on the stereo there was no other sound or movement until seven-thirty, when Max said “Wow.”

I spot Deadeye on Haight Street, and he gets in the car. Until we get off the Street he sits very low and inconspicuous. Deadeye wants me to meet his old lady, but first he wants to talk to me about how he got hip to helping people.

“Here I was, just a tough kid on a motorcycle,” he says, “and suddenly I see that young people don’t have to walk alone.” Deadeye has a clear evangelistic gaze and the reasonable rhetoric of a car salesman. He is society’s model product. I try to meet his gaze directly because he once told me he could read character in people’s eyes, particularly if he has just dropped acid, which he did, about nine o’clock this morning. “They just have to remember one thing,” he says. “The Lord’s Prayer. And that can help them in more ways than one.”

He takes a much-folded letter from his wallet.

The letter is from a little girl he helped. “My loving brother,” it begins. “I thought I’d write you a letter since I’m a part of you. Remember that: When you feel happiness, I do, when you feel . . .”

“What I want to do now,” Deadeye says, “is set up a house where a person of any age can come, spend a few days, talk over his problems. *Any age*. People your age, they’ve got problems too.”

I say a house will take money.

“I’ve found a way to make money,” Deadeye says. He hesitates only a few seconds. “I could’ve made eighty-five dollars on the Street just then. See, in my pocket I had a hundred tabs of acid. I had to come up with twenty dollars by tonight or we’re out of the house we’re in, so I knew somebody who had acid, and I knew somebody who wanted it, so I made the connection.”

Since the Mafia moved into the LSD racket, the quantity is up and the quality is down . . . Historian Arnold Toynbee celebrated his 78th birthday Friday night by snapping his fingers and tapping his toes to the Quicksilver Messenger Service . . . are a couple of items from Herb Caen’s column one morning as the West declined in the spring of 1967.

When I was in San Francisco a tab, or a cap, of LSD-25 sold for three to five dollars, depending upon the seller and the district. LSD was slightly cheaper in the Haight-Ashbury than in the Fillmore, where it was used rarely, mainly as a sexual ploy, and sold by pushers of hard drugs, *e.g.*, heroin, or “smack.” A great deal of acid was being cut with Methedrine, which is the trade name for an amphetamine, because Methedrine can simulate the flash that low-quality acid lacks. Nobody knows how much LSD is actually in a tab, but the standard trip is supposed to be 250 micrograms. Grass was running ten dollars a lid, five dollars a matchbox. Hash was considered “a luxury item.” All the amphetamines, or “speed”—Benzedrine, Dexedrine, and particularly Methedrine—were in far more common use in the late spring than they had been in the early spring. Some attributed this to the presence of the Syndicate; others to a general deterioration of the scene, to the incursions of gangs and younger part-time, or “plastic,” hippies, who like the amphetamines and the illusions of action and power they give. Where Methedrine is in wide use, heroin tends to be available, because, I was told, “You can get awful damn high shooting crystal, and smack can be used to bring you down.”

* * *

Deadeye’s old lady, Gerry, meets us at the door of their place. She is a big, hearty girl who has always counseled at Girl Scout camps during summer vacations and was “in social welfare” at the University of Washington when she decided that she “just hadn’t done enough living” and came to San Francisco. “Actually the heat was bad in Seattle,” she adds.

“The first night I got down here,” she says, “I stayed with a gal I met over at the Blue Unicorn. I looked like I’d just arrived, had a knapsack and stuff.” After that, Gerry stayed at a house the Diggers were running, where she met Deadeye. “Then it took time to get my bearings, so I haven’t done much work yet.”

I ask Gerry what work she does. “Basically I’m a poet,” she says, “but I had my guitar stolen right after I arrived, and that kind of hung up my thing.”

“Get your books,” Deadeye orders. “Show her your books.” Gerry demurs, then goes into the bedroom and comes back with several theme books full of verse. I leaf through them but Deadeye is still talking about helping people. “Any kid that’s on speed,” he says, “I’ll try to get him off it. The only advantage to it from the kids’ point of view is that you don’t have to worry about sleeping or eating.”

“Or sex,” Gerry adds.

“That’s right. When you’re strung out on crystal you don’t need *nothing*.”

“It can lead to the hard stuff,” Gerry says. “Take your average Meth freak, once he’s started putting the needle in his arm, it’s not too hard to say, well, let’s shoot a little smack.”

All the while I am looking at Gerry’s poems. They are a very young girl’s poems, each written out in a neat hand and finished off with a curlicue. Dawns are roseate, skies silver-tinted. When Gerry writes “crystal” in her books, she does not mean Meth.

“You gotta get back to your writing,” Deadeye says fondly, but Gerry ignores this. She is telling about somebody who propositioned her yesterday. “He just walked up to me on the Street, offered me six hundred dollars to go to Reno and do the thing.”

“You’re not the only one he approached,” Deadeye says.

“If some chick wants to go with him, fine,” Gerry says. “Just don’t bum my trip.” She empties the tuna-fish can we are using for an ashtray and goes over to look at a girl who is



MP: VV

asleep on the floor. It is the same girl who was sleeping on the floor the first day I came to Deadeye's place. She has been sick a week now, ten days. "Usually when somebody comes up to me on the Street like that," Gerry adds, "I hit him for some change."

When I saw Gerry in the Park the next day I asked her about the sick girl, and Gerry said cheerfully that she was in the hospital, with pneumonia.

Max tells me about how he and Sharon got together. "When I saw her the first time on Haight Street, I flashed. I mean flashed. So I started some conversation with her about her beads, see, but I didn't care about her beads." Sharon lived in a house where a friend of Max's lived, and the next time he saw her was when he took the friend some bananas. "It was during the great banana bubble. You had to kind of force your personality and the banana peels down their throats. Sharon and I were like kids—we just smoked bananas and looked at each other and smoked more bananas and looked at each other."

But Max hesitated. For one thing he thought Sharon was his friend's girl. "For another I didn't know if I wanted to get hung up with an old lady." But the next time he visited the house, Sharon was on acid.

"So everybody yelled 'Here comes the banana man,'" Sharon interrupts, "and I got all excited."

"She was living in this crazy house," Max continues. "There was this one kid, all he did was scream. His whole trip was to practice screams. It was too much." Max still hung back from Sharon. "But then she offered me a tab, and I knew."

Max walked to the kitchen and back with the tab, wondering whether to take it. "And then I decided to flow with it, and that was that. Because once you drop acid with somebody you flash on, you see the whole world melt in her eyes."

"It's stronger than anything in the world," Sharon says.

"Nothing can break it up," Max says. "As long as it lasts."

No milk today—

My love has gone away . . .

The end of my hopes—

The end of all my dreams—

is a song I heard every morning in the cold late spring of 1967 on KFRC, the Flower Power Station, San Francisco.

Deadeye and Gerry tell me they plan to be married. An Episcopal priest in the District has promised to perform the wedding in Golden Gate Park, and they will have a few rock groups there, "a real community thing." Gerry's brother is also getting married, in Seattle. "Kind of interesting," Gerry muses, "because, you know, his is the traditional straight wedding, and then you have the contrast with ours."

"I'll have to wear a tie to his," Deadeye says.

"Right," Gerry says.

"Her parents came down to meet me, but they weren't ready for me," Deadeye notes philosophically.

"They finally gave it their blessing," Gerry says. "In a way."

"They came to me and her father said, 'Take care of her,'" Deadeye reminisces. "And her mother said, 'Don't let her go to jail.'"

Barbara baked a macrobiotic apple pie and she and Tom and Max and Sharon and I are eating it. Barbara tells me how she learned to find happiness in "the woman's thing." She and Tom had gone somewhere to live with the Indians, and although she first found it hard to be shunted off with the women and never to enter into any of the men's talk, she soon got the point. "That was where the *trip* was," she says.

Barbara is on what is called the woman's trip to the exclusion of almost everything else. When she and Tom and Max and Sharon need money, Barbara will take a part-time job, modeling or teaching kindergarten, but she dislikes earning more than ten or twenty dollars a week. Most of the time she keeps house and bakes. "Doing something that shows your love that way," she says, "is just about the most beautiful thing I know." Whenever I hear about the woman's trip, which is often, I think a lot about nothin'-says-lovin'-like-something-from-the-oven and the Feminine Mystique and how it is possible for people to be the unconscious instruments of values they would strenuously reject on a conscious level, but I do not mention this to Barbara.

It is a pretty nice day and I am driving down the Street and I see Barbara at a light.

What am I doing, she wants to know.

I am just driving around.

"Groovy," she says.

It's a beautiful day, I say.

"Groovy," she agrees.

She wants to know if I will come over. Sometime soon, I say.

"Groovy," she says.

I ask if she wants to drive to the Park but she is too busy. She is out to buy wool for her loom.

Arthur Lisch gets pretty nervous whenever he sees me now because the Digger line this week is that they aren't talking to "media poisoners," which is me. So I still don't have a tap on Chester Anderson, but one day in the Panhandle I run into a kid who says he is "Chester's associate." He has on a black cape, black slouch hat, mauve Job's Daughters sweatshirt and dark glasses, and he says his name is Claude Hayward, but never mind that because I think of him just as The Connection. The Connection offers to "check me out."

I take off my dark glasses so he can see my eyes. He leaves his on.

"How much do you get paid for doing this kind of media poisoning?" he says for openers.

I put my dark glasses back on.

"There's only one way to find out where it's at," The Connection says, and jerks his thumb at the photographer I'm with. "Dump him and get out on the Street. Don't take money. You won't need money." He reaches into his cape and pulls out a Mimeographed sheet announcing a series of classes at the Digger Free Store on How to Avoid Getting Busted, Gangbangs, VD, Rape, Pregnancy, Beatings, and Starvation. "You oughta come," The Connection says. "You'll need it."

I say maybe, but meanwhile I would like to talk to Chester Anderson.

"If we decide to get in touch with you at all," The Connection says, "we'll get in touch with you real quick." He kept an eye on me in the Park after that but never called the number I gave him.

It is twilight and cold and too early to find Deadeye at the Blue Unicorn so I ring Max's bell. Barbara comes to the door.

"Max and Tom are seeing somebody on a kind of business thing," she says. "Can you come back a little later?"

I am hard put to think what Max and Tom might be seeing somebody about in the way of business, but a few days later in the Park I find out.

"Hey," Max calls. "Sorry you couldn't come up the other day, but *business* was being done." This time I get the point. "We got some great stuff," he says, and begins to elaborate. Every third person in the Park this afternoon looks like a narcotics agent and I try to change the subject. Later I suggest to Max that he be more wary in public. "Listen, I'm very cautious," he says. "You can't be too careful."

By now I have an unofficial taboo contact with the San Francisco Police Department. What happens is that this cop and I meet in various late-movie ways, like I happen to be sitting in the bleachers at a baseball game and he happens to sit down next to me, and we exchange guarded generalities. No information actually passes between us, but after a while we get to kind of like each other.

"The kids aren't too bright," he is telling me on this particular day. "They'll tell you they can always spot an undercover, they'll tell you about 'the kind of car he drives.' They aren't talking about undercovers, they're talking about plainclothesmen who just happen to drive unmarked cars, like I do. They can't tell an undercover. An undercover doesn't drive some black Ford with a two-way radio."

He tells me about an undercover who was taken out of the District because he was believed to be overexposed, too familiar. He was transferred to the narcotics squad, and by error was sent immediately back into the District as a narcotics undercover.

The cop plays with his keys. "You want to know how smart these kids are?" he says finally. "The first week, this guy makes forty-three cases."

The Jook Savages are supposed to be having a May Day party in Larkspur and I go by the Warehouse and Don and Sue Ann think it would be nice to drive over there because Sue Ann's three-old, Michael, hasn't been out lately. The air is soft and there is a sunset haze around the Golden Gate and Don asks Sue Ann how many flavors she can detect in a single grain of rice and Sue tells Don maybe she better learn to cook *yang*, maybe they are all too *yin* at the Warehouse, and I try to teach Michael "Frère Jacques." We each have our own trip and it is a nice drive. Which is just as well because there is nobody at all at the Jook Savages' place, not even the Jook Savages. When we get back Sue Ann decides cook up a lot of apples they have around the Warehouse and Don starts working with his light show and I go down to see Max for a minute. "Out of sight," Max says about the Larkspur caper. "Somebody thinks it would be groovy to turn on five hundred people the first day in May, and it would be, but then they turn on the last day in April instead, so it doesn't happen. If it happens, it happens. If it doesn't, it doesn't. Who cares. Nobody cares."

Some kid with braces on his teeth is playing his guitar and boasting that he got the last of the STP from Mr. O. himself and somebody is talking about how five grams of acid will be liberated within the next month and you can see that nothing much is happening this afternoon around the *San Francisco Oracle* office. A boy sits at a drawing board drawing the infinitesimal figures that people do on speed, and the kid with the braces watches him. “*I’m gonna shoot my wo-man,*” he sings softly. “*She been with a-noth-er man.*” Someone works out the numerology of my name and the name of the photographer I’m with. The photographer’s is all white and the sea (“If I were to make you some beads, see, I’d do it mainly in white,” he is told), but mine has a double death symbol. The afternoon does not seem to be getting anywhere, so it is suggested that we go over to Japantown and find somebody named Sandy who will take us to the Zen temple.

Four boys and one middle-aged man are sitting on a grass mat at Sandy’s place, sipping anise tea and watching Sandy read Laura Huxley’s *You Are Not the Target*.

We sit down and have some anise tea. “Meditation turns us on,” Sandy says. He has a shaved head and the kind of cherubic face usually seen in newspaper photographs of mass murderers. The middle-aged man, whose name is George, is making me uneasy because he is in a trance next to me and stares at me without seeing me.

I feel that my mind is going—George is *dead*, or we *all* are—when the telephone rings.

“It’s for George,” Sandy says.

“George, *telephone*.”

“*George*.”

Somebody waves his hand in front of George and George finally gets up, bows, and moves toward the door on the balls of his feet.

“I think I’ll take George’s tea,” somebody says. “George—are you coming back?”

George stops at the door and stares at each of us in turn. “In a moment,” he snaps.

*Do you know who is the first eternal spaceman
of this universe?*

The first to send his wild wild vibrations

To all those cosmic superstations?

For the song he always shouts

Sends the planets flipping out . . .

But I’ll tell you before you think me loony

That I’m talking about Narada Muni . . .

Singing

HARE KRISHNA HARE KRISHNA

KRISHNA KRISHNA HARE HARE

HARE RAMA HARE RAMA

RAMA RAMA HARE HARE

is a Krishna song. Words by

Howard Wheeler and music by

Michael Grant.

Maybe the trip is not in Zen but in Krishna, so I pay a visit to Michael Grant, the Swami A.C. Bhaktivedanta's leading disciple in San Francisco. Michael Grant is at home with his brother-in-law and his wife, a pretty girl wearing a cashmere pullover, a jumper, and a red caste mark on her forehead.

"I've been associated with the Swami since about last July," Michael says. "See, the Swami came here from India and he was at this ashram in upstate New York and he just kept to himself and chanted a lot. For a couple of months. Pretty soon I helped him get his storefront in New York. Now it's an international movement, which we spread by teaching this chant." Michael is fingering his wooden beads and I notice that I am the only person in the room with shoes on. "It's catching on like wildfire."

"If everybody chanted," the brother-in-law says, "there wouldn't be any problem with the police or anybody."

"Ginsberg calls the chant ecstasy, but the Swami says that's not exactly it." Michael walks across the room and straightens a picture of Krishna as a baby. "Too bad you can't meet the Swami," he adds. "The Swami's in New York now."

"Ecstasy's not the right word at all," says the brother-in-law, who has been thinking about it. "It makes you think of some . . . *mundane* ecstasy."

The next day I drop by Max and Sharon's, and find them in bed smoking a little morning hash. Sharon once advised me that half a joint even of grass would make getting up in the morning a beautiful thing. I ask Max how Krishna strikes him.

"You can get a high on a mantra," he says. "But I'm holy on acid."

Max passes the joint to Sharon and leans back. "Too bad you couldn't meet the Swami," he says. "The Swami was the turn-on."

Anybody who thinks this is all about drugs has his head in a bag. It's a social movement, quintessentially romantic, the kind that recurs in times of real social crisis. The themes are always the same. A return to innocence. The invocation of an earlier authority and control. The mysteries of the blood. An itch for the transcendental, for purification. Right there you've got the ways that romanticism historically ends up in trouble, lends itself to authoritarianism. When the direction appears. How long do you think it'll take for that to happen? is a question a San Francisco psychiatrist asked me.

At the time I was in San Francisco the political potential of what was then called the movement was just becoming clear. It had always been clear to the revolutionary core of the Diggers, whose every guerrilla talent was now bent toward open confrontations and the creation of a summer emergency, and it was clear to many of the straight doctors and priests and sociologists who had occasion to work in the District, and it could rapidly become clear to any outsider who bothered to decode Chester Anderson's call-to-action communiqués or to watch who was there first at the street skirmishes which now set the tone for life in the District. One did not have to be a political analyst to see it; the boys in the rock groups saw it, because they were often where it was happening. "In the Park there are always twenty or thirty people below the stand," one of the Dead complained to me. "Ready to take the crowd on some militant trip."

But the peculiar beauty of this political potential, as far as the activists were concerned, was that it remained not clear at all to most of the inhabitants of the District, perhaps because

the few seventeen-year-olds who are political realists tend not to adopt romantic idealism as a life style. Nor was it clear to the press, which at varying levels of competence continued to report “the hippie phenomenon” as an extended panty raid; an artistic avant-garde led by such comfortable YMHA regulars as Allen Ginsberg; or a thoughtful protest, not unlike joining the Peace Corps, against the culture which had produced Saran-Wrap and the Vietnam War. This last, or they’re-trying-to-tell-us-something approach, reached its apogee in a *Time* cover story which revealed that hippies “scorn money—they call it ‘bread’” and remains the most remarkable, if unwitting, extant evidence that the signals between the generations are irrevocably jammed.

Because the signals the press was getting were immaculate of political possibilities, the tensions of the District went unremarked upon, even during the period when there were so many observers on Haight Street from *Life* and *Look* and CBS that they were largely observing one another. The observers believed roughly what the children told them: that they were a generation dropped out of political action, beyond power games, that the New Left was just another ego trip. *Ergo*, there really were no activists in the Haight-Ashbury, and those things which happened every Sunday were spontaneous demonstrations because, just as the Diggers say, the police are brutal and juveniles have no rights and runaways are deprived of their right to self-determination and people are starving to death on Haight Street, a scale model of Vietnam.

Of course the activists—not those whose thinking had become rigid but those whose approach to revolution was imaginatively anarchic—had long ago grasped the reality which still eluded the press: we were seeing something important. We were seeing the attempt of a handful of pathetically unequipped children to create a community in a social vacuum. Once we had seen these children, we could no longer overlook the vacuum, no longer pretend that the society’s atomization could be reversed. This was not a traditional generational rebellion. At some point between 1945 and 1967 we had somehow neglected to tell these children the rules of the game we happened to be playing. Maybe we had stopped believing in the rules ourselves, maybe we were having a failure of nerve about the game. Maybe there were just too few people around to do the telling. These were children who grew up cut loose from the web of cousins and great-aunts and family doctors and lifelong neighbors who had traditionally suggested and enforced the society’s values. They are children who have moved around a lot, *San Jose, Chula Vista, here*. They are less in rebellion against the society than ignorant of it, able only to feed back certain of its most publicized self-doubts, *Vietnam, Saran-Wrap, diet pills, the Bomb*.

They feed back exactly what is given them. Because they do not believe in words—words are for “typeheads,” Chester Anderson tells them, and a thought which needs words is just one more of those ego trips—their only proficient vocabulary is in the society’s platitudes. As it happens I am still committed to the idea that the ability to think for one’s self depends upon one’s mastery of the language, and I am not optimistic about children who will settle for saying, to indicate that their mother and father do not live together, that they come from “a broken home.” They are sixteen, fifteen, fourteen years old, younger all the time, an army of children waiting to be given the words.

Peter Berg knows a lot of words.

“Is Peter Berg around?” I ask.

“Maybe.”

“Are you Peter Berg?”

“Yeh.”

The reason Peter Berg does not bother sharing too many words with me is because two of the words he knows are “media poisoning.” Peter Berg wears a gold earring and is perhaps the only person in the District on whom a gold earring looks obscurely ominous. He belongs to the San Francisco Mime Troupe, some of whose members started the Artist’s Liberation Front for “those who seek to combine their creative urge with socio-political involvement.” It was out of the Mime Troupe that the Diggers grew, during the 1966 Hunter’s Point riots, when it seemed a good idea to give away food and do puppet shows in the streets making fun of the National Guard. Along with Arthur Lisch, Peter Berg is part of the shadow leadership of the Diggers, and it was he who more or less invented and first introduced to the press the notion that there would be an influx into San Francisco during the summer of 1967 of 200,000 indigent adolescents. The only conversation I ever have with Peter Berg is about how he holds me personally responsible for the way *Life* captioned Henri Cartier-Bresson’s pictures out of Cuba, but I like to watch him at work in the Park.

Janis Joplin is singing with Big Brother in the Panhandle and almost everybody is high and it is a pretty nice Sunday afternoon between three and six o’clock, which the activists say are the three hours of the week when something is most likely to happen in the Haight-Ashbury, and who turns up but Peter Berg. He is with his wife and six or seven other people, along with Chester Anderson’s associate The Connection, and the first peculiar thing is, they’re in blackface.

I mention to Max and Sharon that some members of the Mime Troupe seem to be in blackface.

“It’s street theater,” Sharon assures me. “It’s supposed to be really groovy.”

The Mime Troupers get a little closer, and there are some other peculiar things about them. For one thing they are tapping people on the head with dime-store plastic night-sticks, and for another they are wearing signs on their backs. “HOW MANY TIMES YOU BEEN RAPED, YOU LOVE FREAKS?” and “WHO STOLE CHUCK BERRY’S MUSIC?”, things like that. Then they are distributing communication company fliers which say:

‘& this summer thousands of un-white un-suburban boppers are going to want to know why you’ve given up what they can’t get & how you get away with it & how come you not a faggot with hair so long & they want haight street one way or the other. IF YOU DON’T KNOW, BY AUGUST HAIGHT STREET WILL BE A CEMETERY.

Max reads the flier and stands up. “I’m getting bad vibes,” he says, and he and Sharon leave.

I have to stay around because I’m looking for Otto so I walk over to where the Mime Troupers have formed a circle around a Negro. Peter Berg is saying if anybody asks that this is street theater, and I figure the curtain is up because what they are doing right now is jabbing the Negro with the nightsticks. They jab, and they bare their teeth, and they rock on the balls of their feet and they wait.

“I’m beginning to get annoyed here,” the Negro says. “I’m gonna get mad.”

By now there are several Negroes around, reading the signs and watching.

"Just beginning to get annoyed, are you?" one of the Mime Troupers says. "Don't you think it's about time?"

"Nobody *stole* Chuck Berry's music, man," says another Negro who has been studying the signs. "Chuck Berry's music belongs to *everybody*."

"Yeh?" a girl in blackface says. "Everybody *who*?"

"Why," he says, confused. "Everybody. In America."

"In *America*," the blackface girl shrieks. "Listen to him talk about *America*."

"Listen," he says helplessly. "Listen here."

"What'd *America* ever do for you?" the girl in blackface jeers. "White kids here, they can sit in the Park all summer long, listen to the music they stole, because their bigshot parents keep sending them money. Who ever sends you money?"

"Listen," the Negro says, his voice rising. "You're gonna start something here, this isn't right—"

"You tell us what's right, black boy," the girl says.

The youngest member of the blackface group, an earnest tall kid about nineteen, twenty, is hanging back at the edge of the scene. I offer him an apple and ask what is going on. "Well," he says, "I'm new at this, I'm just beginning to study it, but you see the capitalists are taking over the District, and that's what Peter—well, ask Peter."

I did not ask Peter. It went on for a while. But on that particular Sunday between three and six o'clock everyone was too high and the weather was too good and the Hunter's Point gangs who usually come in between three and six on Sunday afternoon had come in on Saturday instead, and nothing started. While I waited for Otto I asked a little girl I knew slightly what she had thought of it. "It's something groovy they call street theater," she said. I said I had wondered if it might not have political overtones. She was seventeen years old and she worked it around in her mind awhile and finally she remembered a couple of words from somewhere. "Maybe it's some John Birch thing," she said.

When I finally find Otto he says "I got something at my place that'll blow your mind," and when we get there I see a child on the living-room floor, wearing a reefer coat, reading a comic book. She keeps licking her lips in concentration and the only off thing about her is that she's wearing white lipstick.

"Five years old," Otto says. "On acid."

The five-year-old's name is Susan, and she tells me she is in High Kindergarten. She lives with her mother and some other people, just got over the measles, wants a bicycle for Christmas, and particularly likes Coca-Cola, ice cream, Marty in the Jefferson Airplane, Bob in the Grateful Dead, and the beach. She remembers going to the beach once a long time ago, and wishes she had taken a bucket. For a year now her mother has given her both acid and peyote. Susan describes it as getting stoned.

I start to ask if any of the other children in High Kindergarten get stoned, but I falter at the key words.

"She means do the other kids in your class turn on, *get stoned*," says the friend of her mother's who brought her to Otto's.

"Only Sally and Anne," Susan says.

"What about Lia?" her mother's friend prompts.

"Lia," Susan says, "is not in High Kindergarten."

Sue Ann's three-year-old Michael started a fire this morning before anyone was up, but Don got it out before much damage was done. Michael burned his arm though, which is probably why Sue Ann was so jumpy when she happened to see him chewing on an electric cord. "You'll fry like rice," she screamed. The only people around were Don and one of Sue Ann's macrobiotic friends and somebody who was on his way to a commune in the Santa Lucias, and they didn't notice Sue Ann screaming at Michael because they were in the kitchen trying to retrieve some very good Moroccan hash which had dropped down through a floorboard damaged in the fire.



Notes on Contributors

AbandonView lives in the American Rust Belt. His artwork last appeared in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009. His art & writing can be found online at <http://wetscraps.blogspot.com/>. Last I knew of him, he was fixing to be hopping a train bound for some dream or other. Choo Choo!

Ric Amante lives in Melrose, Massachusetts. His poetry last appeared in *Cenacle* | 71 | December 2009. I'm looking forward to the time when we are walking again through the streets of Boston, talking our golden bullshit like other days.

Jim Burke III lives in Hartford, Connecticut. His prose last appeared in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009. We're soon going to set up his music studio even more elaborately than in the past. Then we're going to launch his music into cyberspace!

Catfishrivers lives in Oak Ridge, New Jersey. His artwork last appeared in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009. This issue marks his first front cover. More of his artwork & writing can be found at <http://www.catfishrivers.com>. His radio show "The River's Edge" can be heard weekends on SpiritPlants Radio (<http://spfradio.yage.net>).

Joe Ciccone lives in Chestnut Hill, Massachusetts. His poetry last appeared in *Cenacle* | 69 | June 2009. He's a doctor, now, as well as musician & poet. A father, too. Come a long way from the swamp highways of Jersey.

Joan Didion lives in New York City, New York. Scriptor Press previously reprinted her essay in this issue in 2009, as part of the Burning Man Books series: http://scriptorpress.yage.net/BM61_2009_didion.pdf.

Ralph H. Emerson lives in South Glastonbury, Connecticut. His prose last appeared in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009. As we publish each new piece, the day draws nearer when they are all gathered into a Scriptor Press volume. Soon, my friend.

Judih Haggai lives at Kibbutz Nir Oz in Israel. Her poetry regularly appears in *The Cenacle*, & can also be found online at <http://tribes.tribe.net/poetryjams>. We had the pleasure of a video chat spanning half the globe the other night, first time we'd spoken live since a brief visit in Hartford some years ago. Hail cyberspace!

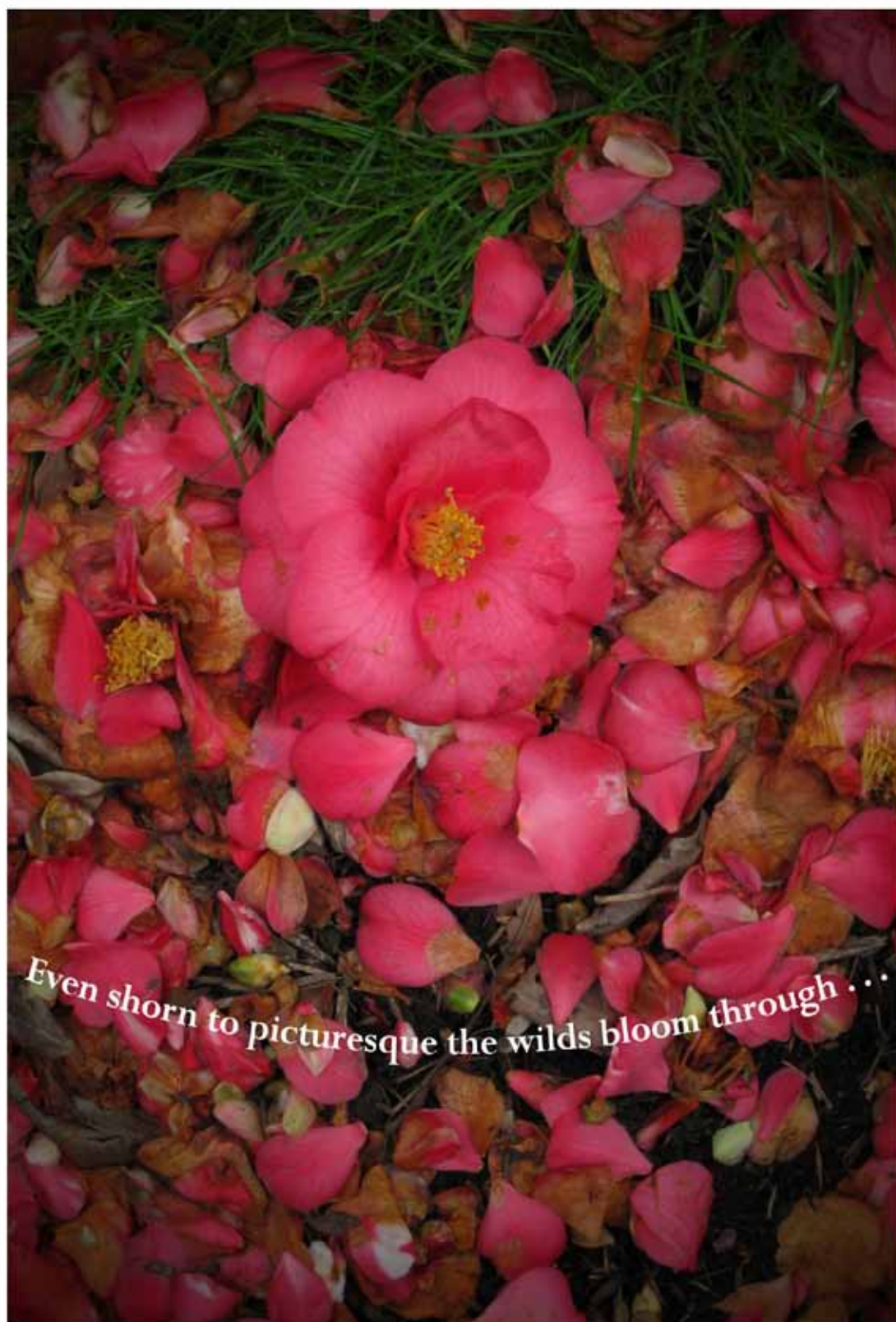
Kassandra Soulard lives in Portland, Oregon. Once again she stayed up with me all night assembling an issue of *The Cenacle*, ever renewing my admiration & love for her.

Raymond Soulard, Jr. lives in Portland, Oregon. It's been 15 years of writing, editing, & publishing this journal, & I can say that it still fascinates me, still inspires me to countless hours at its task, & I still wonder what else is possible?

Victor Vanek lives in The Dalles, Oregon. His photography last appeared in *Cenacle* | 70 | October 2009. Come summer, Victor & KD & I will be packing a truck full of possessions & crossing the land to arrive back where I set out from eight years ago. Strange world over the years, over & over.



City life is millions of people being lonesome together.
- Henry David Thoreau



Even shorn to picturesque the wilds bloom through ...